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ABSTRACT

"Strong leadership" is almost always listed as an attribute of successful schools. To learn the views of outstanding school leaders, each regional representative of the U.S. Department of Education (USED) convened a meeting of 25-30 local educators well known for their leadership in sustained school-improvement efforts. The groups were composed of principals, teachers, parents, and others. This report summarizes focus-group participants' views toward and personal experiences with leadership for sustained reform. Respondents said that effective leaders cultivated a broad definition of community and gave voice to all stakeholders; were committed to the dream and adopted key values; used knowledge to minimize failure and encourage risk-taking; demonstrated savvy and persistence; and put to use an array of personal characteristics (humor, passion, empathy, creativity, common sense, and patience). The sample reported that they utilized three kinds of self-assessment strategies--individual, small-group, and formal. Competence in designing and implementing self-assessment plans should be a central element of leaders' professional development. Two tables are included. Appendices contain excerpts from the Leadership Rubric aligned with provisions of the Kentucky Education Reform Act and a list of additional resources. (LMI)

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The Role of Leadership in Sustaining School Reform:

Voices from the Field

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The Role of Leadership in Sustaining School Reform: Voices From the Field

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The Role of Leadership in Sustaining School Reform: Voices From the Field

Executive Summary

"Strong leadership" appears in virtually every list of attributes of successful schools. But what do long-term school reform leaders view as their essential professional competencies? What do they see as their role in sustaining reform? How do they engage teachers, families, and communities in partnerships that build programs to help children meet challenging standards? How do such leaders know when they are doing a good job? To learn the views of outstanding school leaders, we asked each of the regional representatives of the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education (USED) to convene a meeting of 25 to 30 local educators who had well-earned reputations as leaders of sustained school improvement efforts. Most participants were seasoned leaders--principals, teachers, parents, and others--whose diversity reflected that of the local education workforce. In focus groups, they were asked to discus three items:

- *From your own experience as a school leader, name two or three key dimensions of leadership for sustained reform--the habits of mind and heart that enable leaders to guide successful school change over the long term....Describe these in the context of your concrete experiences as a school leader.*

- *Take the next few minutes to think of a story from your career as a school leader, one that is very important to you, and relate it to a dimension of leadership that best expresses the essence of the story.*

- *Take the dimensions of leadership that you have identified and featured in your stories and discuss possible strategies for using them for self-assessment, peer coaching, or other professional development activities.*

This report summarizes participants' answers, retells some of their leadership stories, and explains some of the strategies for self-assessment that these innovators use themselves or think might be worth using.

Dimensions of Sustaining Leadership

Forum participants came up with hundreds of different ways to identify key dimensions of leadership for sustaining reform. Their responses fell into five general categories:

Partnership and voice: Effective reform leaders cultivate a broad definition of community and consider the contribution that every member can make to helping children meet challenging standards. They hear the voices of many stakeholders--families, businesses, and other groups and

institutions. Their ability to develop plans that reflect the legitimate influence of others draws in many authentic partners, whose personal convictions as well as community spirit energize participation. They look for evidence of widespread participation in important aspects of change. Establishing partnerships and listening to a chorus of voices are leadership skills that permeate all aspects of reform. A mid-Atlantic high school principal[1] told a story about how one reluctant tenured faculty member was drawn into a schoolwide reform effort:

> When I arrived at City High School, the chair of the English department was the resident scoffer. Arms folded, eyes glazed, poised with car keys in hand, he endured staff meetings. On good days, he graded papers. I began to ask his opinion and demonstrated that I valued it. I asked him to serve in a major leadership role in school strategic planning, insisted that he make the final decision among two candidates for a job in his department, and begged him to chair a long-term study group. That was over a period of three years.
>
> By the middle of the second year, he was asking for help to use the computers and other high-tech equipment he had scorned the year before. He began to shame others into learning about it. A confirmed college-prep teacher, he took an interest in at-risk students and insisted that others attend student support team meetings on their behalf. This year, he responded to a need identified in the long-term study and organized an ethnic literature course with at-risk students in mind; he now claims this as his favorite class. With others in his department, he has proposed new graduation requirements, which they see as a need identified by citizens in our community. He is agonizing over catching two top students who were cheating, when that may have brought him vindictive pleasure four years ago.
>
> None of these changes were mandated for him in a professional development plan. He found a place of worth among his peers, and he discovered that the administration wanted to hear--and act on--his opinion. He blossomed when he was valued, trusted, urged, but never pushed too quickly or shamed for his poor attitude.

Vision and values: Participants agreed that effective reform leaders are dependable and committed "keepers of the dream" and that keeping the dream means adopting key values. They said the school's vision has to be a collective vision, "crafted collaboratively, with generosity of spirit." Good leaders know that the dream must be student centered and focused on ambitious academic goals and that it is continuously evolving. They know that realizing the dream hinges partly on operating consistently according to values and beliefs tied to that vision. In different ways they ask themselves daily: does this decision help realize the dream? Keith Nomura, a principal in an urban California school district, told this story of his faculty's "amen experience" in constructing a vision:

> I truly believe that an effective principal needs to be like an effective minister or pastor, with the capacity to inspire in others the sense of commitment and passion that

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[1] The stories in this summary and in the complete document are printed as told by participants, who approved the final text and decided what identifying information to provide about themselves and their schools.

will carry the change for the long haul. When the staff, like a congregation, comes to that collective and spontaneous "amen," that is a magical moment. Here is my story.

After three years of team building, sharing power and decisionmaking, after struggling to find the right process to prepare the staff to move to each new level, along came Senate Bill 1274, the school restructuring grant program. For me this seemed like the right vehicle to use [to achieve our goals]. The staff was unsure at first, but I kept pushing, and finally a cadre of staff went to the training workshop [to learn how to write a 1274 proposal].

They came back both inspired and frustrated: inspired by the possibilities and frustrated by the short timeline to put a proposal together. The staff as a whole decided to go for it, to come to consensus on a proposal that would turn our school upside-down if implemented. In trying to craft the vision, the staff and I struggled with terms, philosophies, language, and more. A subcommittee gathered our thoughts and went away to try to put them into some appropriate prose. They came back with one version, received response, then went away. I participated on the subcommittee and as a member of the staff.

Finally, the subcommittee came to the staff with a proposal that became the vision for the whole school. As they read the vision, there was this collective "yes!" like an "amen" at church. I had chills and tears, as did others. That vision, that passion burned in my soul and, I believe, in the souls of many (if not all) of those in that room that day. Now, three and one-half years later, that passion still burns at our school.

Knowledge and daring: Effective reform leaders develop relevant information bases and cultivate human resources to minimize failure while encouraging risk-taking, said the forum participants. They study, count, seek advice, send staff to workshops, bring in experts and mentors, consult their own insight and experience, and in a hundred other ways increase capacity to make good decisions. Then they step into the unknown and encourage staff to do likewise. Their risks are very carefully calculated to push the boundaries of what is known and commonly done without threatening long-term success. Lois Jones, principal of Oceana High School in Pacifica, California, told how following up on a well-conceived collective decision with a personal risk opened the gates of disclosure among staff members and set them back on the path toward professionalism:

The staff had agreed to implement a peer coaching program, as part of our self-assessment process. We agreed that coaching teams would cross learning areas and that teams would have experienced and new teachers working together to improve classroom practice, thus improving student learning. The work began: teams shared student work and conferenced on practices. However, we bogged down on classroom observations. We did put a process in place--preobservation conference, classroom visitation, and postobservation conference--and grant money was designated for support, but observations did not occur.

As I thought about what was happening and--more importantly--not happening, I decided to find a nonthreatening way to confront the issue. At Oceana, all certificated staff teach in the classroom; all are a part of the process, so I was directly involved.

> At a staff meeting on peer coaching, I approached the topic by relating to the staff how I had "forgotten" to meet for a preobservation conference. My question was, "Could I have missed this meeting because the entire issue of coaching one another made me anxious and fearful?" I asked whether anyone else had similar concerns.
>
> A wonderful conversation followed; for the first time we openly addressed the fears inherent in such a process. As a result of this exchange, we built in safety nets to ease the fears of such risk-taking. Now classroom visitations have tremendously increased and the process is becoming institutionalized.

Savvy and persistence: Ever practical, forum participants said effective reform leaders know how the system works and they can take a lot of flak (if they must). They know how to interact with the central office, the local community, and others outside the school. They know how the school structure nurtures or discourages attitudes and behavior. They can put up with resistance inside or outside the building, but they eventually find ways to win cooperation. They are good managers. They monitor their understanding of the nature and operations of systems, and they maintain a network of supporters to lean on in times of particular stress.

Martha Jones, principal of Miller Middle School in Macon, Georgia, paved the way for program success by matching the aggressiveness of her public relations campaign to the aggressiveness of her campaign against school violence:

> Perhaps my most radical reform has been the effort to eliminate violence in a middle school with 1,350 students and 84 teachers. In our socially and culturally divided community, the middle school I inherited three years ago was the established leader, academically and in every other measure. However, the 22 percent of Macon students who enroll in private schools are said to do so because they fear the violence in public schools.
>
> So I began the preliminaries to put in place a policy of zero tolerance for violence and prepared for the flood of criticism that would certainly be heard from the parents of children who got caught. I became the chief cheerleader, enlisted the opinions and support of my superiors, teachers, parents, and students; we were off. Every 20 feet, I posted signs with the diagonal slash mark across the word "violence" written in letters dripping blood-red paint. Campus police were enlisted for random searches of lockers and bookbags. Alternatives to violence were promoted through peer mediation and closed circuit t.v. announcements. Students at Miller are suspended automatically if they 1) exchange blows; 2) promote acts of violence with their words or actions--even to the point of spreading word of impending violence; or 3) threaten violence of any kind. Those with weapons are either suspended or sent to an alternative school.
>
> Now non-violence has become the norm. Although there have been repercussions in the form of numerous appeals, incidents of violence have decreased almost to the point of nonexistence.

Personal qualities: Effective reform leaders put to good use an array of personal qualities that many participants felt were innate rather than acquired. Without resolving the nature/nurture

aspect of this dimension of leadership, participants mentioned an array of personal qualities that make leadership more effective or leaders easier to follow. Passion, humor, and empathy came up the most often. A well-developed sense of humor was often mentioned as a priceless asset. Strength of character and general maturity were also described as essential. Patience is key. Good leaders have both wisdom and common sense, and they are viewed as trustworthy and reliable. Many credit their success to creativity, although others credit the creativity of their faculties. Furthermore, "If you're not sensitive, you're going to be lost in dealing with children." The obvious variation in the personalities and temperaments of the forum participants suggests that one can become a notably successful school leader given any of a considerable array of gifts and tendencies.

Role of Self-Assessment

Self-assessment is a tool that some participants said they use to demonstrate their accountability to their own values as well as to the appropriate expectations of their professional communities. Their preferred approaches to self assessment included (1) individual, reflective strategies; (2) activities that could be organized for a small group of learners in the role of reform sustainer; and (3) a formal rubric that attempts to chart progress in a complex system.

Individual strategies: Journal-keeping, portfolio development, performance indicators, surveys, and mentors were the most frequently mentioned individual approaches to self-assessment.

- Journal-keeping is perhaps the most personal method of reflective assessment. Although journal-keeping often serves solely as a reflective device, some participants use it as an anecdotal record focused on a particular dimension of leadership.

- Several participants suggested developing portfolios of selected documents produced in the course of their work. For instance, artifacts of parent contacts--telephone logs, message slips, notes from home--can illustrate something of the scope and frequency of home/school communications. More elaborate portfolios that include, for example, videotapes of supervision conferences or meetings, archives of email correspondence, and photocopies of notes to teachers and students related to reform goals may produce a thorough and authentic body of evidence about leadership competence.

- Performance indicators may be developed as part of the annual professional plan that many leaders already use to list goals and activities related to their assignment and ambitions. For each aspect of such a plan that is related to sustaining reform, some identify a performance indicator and collect data on the indicators to demonstrate accomplishments.

- Many participants found surveys to be a good strategy for assessing some dimensions of leadership. However, sustaining reform is not a reliable way to build general popularity, inasmuch as change makes people uncomfortable--especially at first--and therefore asking the right questions and using the right analytic strategies is essential.

- Mentors who serve as "critical friends" are highly valued by the leaders who participated in the forums. Some found advisors in a supervisor or experienced colleague in the education system. Others looked outside the system; corporate or

university partners were a commonly-mentioned resource. Corporate partners helped with applications of analytic frames highlighting such leadership dimensions as efficiency, communication, problem-solving, and continuous improvement.

Group exercises in self-assessment: Several focus groups recommended group activities for self-assessment, combining personal data collection and analysis with collective discussions and feedback to create a textured portrayal of performance that could then be measured against some agreed-upon standard. Most of the ideas were explicitly developmental, aiming to use group sessions to identify targets for personal reflection and generate analytic frameworks.

Tailor-made rubrics: One way to focus data collection and calibrate measurements of progress is to create a rubric. Participants from Kentucky generated a rubric targeting the specific leadership dimensions demanded to implement provisions of Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA). The rubric, which runs to about 19 pages in table form, details particular behaviors that define levels of competence, from the novice rating of 1 to the distinguished rating of 4, in 12 areas of leadership: assessment, curriculum, instruction, school transformation plans, parent involvement, community engagement, high school restructuring, technology, site-based decisionmaking, primary grade programs, personnel evaluation, and budget.

Developing a self-assessment system: For every participant who used self-assessment for professional purposes, there were two or three who viewed it as an appealing but as-yet-untried solution to the problem of collecting evidence of effectiveness. As pathfinders, they may not score high on traditional rating systems, but as accountable members of an education system, they appreciate the importance of documenting progress. From what participants said about their work and their approaches to accountability and from our own experience as educators, we have learned a few simple principles to guide development of a self-assessment system.

Like any other assessment, self-assessment has three components. First, criteria for assessment must be identified. In self-assessment, the basic question is, "Am I doing a good job?" Answering that question begins with describing what a "good job" looks like in the relevant context. Second, data collection methods suitable for use in self-assessment with respect to their relevance, practicality, and accuracy should be used. Third, techniques for analyzing data should make technical sense and answer the self-assessor's burning questions. Many easy-to-use strategies would serve equally well to document many commonly-adopted criteria for success in sustaining reform. Choosing a strategy that matches one's learning style or circumstances makes a lot of sense. For forum participants, the appeal of self-assessment was that it permitted them to create an accountability system tailored to their avowed principles and situation. However, they also recognized the importance of being responsive to legitimate demands of other authorities in the district. This suggests that some aspects of self-assessment could be aimed specifically at components of professional performance that are deemed crucial by outsiders.

Self-Assessment Skill: A Professional Development Goal

Forum discussions revealed what successful school leaders view as the key dimensions of their skill and how--in a system so often bound by old orthodoxies--they know when they are doing a good job. They shared many ideas about essentials, but fewer than expected had developed systematic ways to evaluate their own performance. In each forum, many had an "aha" experience, learning

through dialogue what indicators they could use to tell if they were still on course. In each forum, there was consensus about the need for more opportunities to reflect on practice in light of the specific visions and values that each reform program holds. Such opportunities are especially productive if they are spent in the company of colleagues who share either a particular reform orientation or the experience of being the solitary gardenia in an iris patch. Participants' stories and comments suggest that competence in designing and implementing self-assessment plans should be a central element of their professional development.

Chapter 1

Recording the Wisdom of Practice: An Overview

Becoming a Learning Community

Lately I've been thinking a lot about a comment one of my teachers made to me about three weeks ago. She said, "We've been talking. What we want to do next year is coach each other. We've gone to all the conferences on multi-age classes, and we haven't found anyone who knows as much as we do .... We can do our own training--we can learn from each other ..." She described a plan for coaching that the teachers had devised. I was elated because I believe that coaching is one of the highest forms of learning. Then I began to reflect on how the staff had come to this place in their thinking ...

For five years, we have been learning together via various means. We meet monthly for discussions of research and staff development sessions led by teachers. The reading specialist has weekly 30-minute "coffee conversations" about language arts, and teachers drop in. Recently, as part of her mentor project, the specialist set up voluntary coaching sessions for teachers wishing to get more information on student progress by using a tool called a running record. The staff loved these coaching sessions--perhaps this is the impetus for the next level of coaching.

But I don't think these events are [the whole story]. For five years, different teachers have taken leadership in providing training in their particular areas of expertise. We all learn together. I go to workshops with teachers so I know what they are learning and can provide materials and emotional support. I'm sure modeling being a learner is part of this, but I'm not sure this is all. Empowerment is part of it too....

Bennetta McLaughlin, Principal
Mt. Diablo (CA) Unified School District

Helping children achieve high standards demands leadership that involves faculties, families, and neighborhoods in transforming ordinary schools into learning communities. Creating places such as Mt. Diablo, where "coffee klatch" conversations center on methods and colleagues are partners involved in peer coaching, is the kind of challenge that faces educational leaders all over the country. Research tells us something about the knowledge and skills of effective leaders in past eras, but school reform movements--with their significant changes in teaching and organizational structures--have brought about changes in leadership requirements. For a long time, good school leaders have been viewed simply as good managers, but in *The Principal's Edge* (1994), McCall claims that most schools now suffer from too much management and too little leadership--leaving them deficient in purpose, direction, shared vision, and activities related to their goals.

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Isobel Lopez (1990) suggests that leadership draws strength from wisdom that "uses intellect, knows heart, and understands spirit." In addition to the skills and knowledge cultivated in experience and formal study, many effective leaders--especially those charting new paths to excellence--use self-assessment to monitor the development of their wisdom. They reflect on their own behavior, sometimes using data they collect from peers, mentors, staff, parents, and students, to determine whether they are pursuing their intended course successfully. These leaders support adoption of new, more authentic assessments of student learning and collaborate with teachers to find more stimulating and enriching forms of professional performance review. In a similar vein, they take responsibility for criticizing their own work, weighing the evidence of its effects thoughtfully. They cultivate the habits of mind and heart that enable leaders to guide successful changes over the long term.

Risking Collaboration at Fremont High

Three years ago, I entered a staff meeting to introduce myself as the new principal. I found an angry faculty: the new master schedule did not reflect the staff's recommendations for change. Fortunately, I had done my homework and foreseen this problem. We formed breakout groups and identified the missing elements in the schedule. Then we commissioned a steering committee to work with the counselors to rebuild the schedule. The staff not only had an opportunity to meet me, but they saw me as a risk-taker with the ability to involve everyone in winning consensus. I became part of Fremont High and worked with the staff to provide students with "houses" focused on career paths, an onsite health clinic (in partnership with Children's Hospital), wider use of cooperative learning in classrooms, and other programs that have led to a great reduction in student homicides in the streets of Oakland. We used to lose 15 to 20 students a year that way, but in the last two years, we have only lost one. Our programs have won many awards and our students achieved many accomplishments.

Robert Duran, writing of his work as
Principal of Fremont High School in Oakland, CA

What do successful, long-term reform leaders view as essential professional competencies? How do these official or unofficial "keepers of the school's dream" know when they are doing a good job? To the extent that a reform project really does involve breaking new ground in curriculum, instruction, and/or organizational arrangements and roles, existing benchmarks may not apply. Taking risks--even carefully calculated risks--may result initially in falling back nearly as often as one moves forward. Practitioners tell instructive tales about reforming schools systemically and keeping up the pace and direction of change after the first flush of enthusiasm for innovation fades. This volume presents reform pioneers' hard-won insights about the qualities of leadership needed to sustain effective innovation and their recommendations for figuring out whether one's own performance meets a high standard.

To learn the views of outstanding school leaders, we asked each of the United States secretary of education's regional representatives to convene a meeting of 25 to 30 local educators who had

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well-earned reputations as leaders of sustained school improvement efforts. We also took advantage of a few national education conferences to call such meetings.

Most participants were seasoned education leaders--principals, teachers, parents, and others--whose diversity reflected that of the local education workforce. In focus groups of eight to ten, they spent four to six hours discussing three items (quoted here from the forum worksheet):

- *From your own experience as a school leader, name two or three key dimensions of leadership for sustained reform--the habits of mind and heart that enable leaders to guide successful school change over the long term....Describe these in the context of your concrete experiences as a school leader.*

- *Take the next few minutes to think of a story from your career as a school leader, one that is very important to you, and relate it to a dimension of leadership that best expresses the essence of the story.*

- *Take the dimensions of leadership that you have identified and featured in your stories and develop a strategy for using them for self-assessment, peer coaching, or other professional development activities.*

Here we report their answers. Chapter 2 describes the dimensions of leadership that participants most commonly characterized as essential. Chapter 3 retells some of the participants' stories, which clothe important dimensions in the fabric of real life scenarios. Chapter 4 explains some of the strategies for self-assessment that these innovators use themselves--or think might be worth using. And in the last chapter, we draw a few conclusions based on the lessons we learned from our own experience and from the forum discussions.

Acting on the advice of forum participants, we scatter throughout the report invitations for the readers to reflect on experience in the same way participants did at the leadership forums. Many of the successful reformers who met with us insisted that doing their job properly demanded more than simply acquiring a storehouse of special knowledge and skills from formal professional coursework, intellectual inquiry, and studies in the school of hard knocks. They said that it was stimulating and refreshing to take the time to rummage through one's own memories in search of inspiration and to compare their findings with those of colleagues. Readers may want to try the reflective exercises we pose to them to explore and analyze their own responses, using a real conversation with a friend or mentor or imagining a conversation with the leaders whose views are presented here.

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Note: All the stories used in this report are written as told by participants, who approved the final text and decided what identifying information to provide about themselves and their schools.

Reflection #1

1. In your view, what is "school reform"? How is it different from adopting a new textbook, for example, or rearranging the schedule to add or subtract a class period or extending the school year by a few days or even weeks?

2. Where in the lifespan of "innovation" do you draw the line between the stage of "introducing and adopting" and the stage of "sustaining"? Think for a minute about the demands of an organization when it is in the midst of launching a change, and its demands later, when ongoing implementation is the focus. What do you think are key differences in demands at these points?

3. In the process of monitoring leadership development, what do you think is the role of the capacity to assess oneself?

Chapter 2

Dimensions of Sustaining Leadership

What is the role of the leader in sustaining school reform? In this series of conversations, we explored educators' perceptions of the elements that define the depth and breadth of a certain kind of leadership. We asked them to describe leadership that enables a school community to re-invent itself and operate in a new mode over a long haul, well past the exhilaration associated with novelty, to become a dynamic learning organization. Some of the forum participants told of former lives as reliable school managers in the traditional mode; thorough and consistent program implementation (not creativity and collaboration) was the hallmark of their work. Others reported on the excitement of developing new and better ways to educate children. Witnessing effective innovation sustained their enthusiasm. All agreed that sustaining reform--being coaches for shared decision making and guides on the path to thoughtful implementation--demanded new skills and knowledge, different from the abilities required to establish and maintain predictable routines or to sweep away the old and install the new. Moving into the second stage of transformation--sustaining change--means finding ways to renew energy and enthusiasm, to stay focused on a vision that is continuously adapting to new and sometimes unforeseen developments. It is a sustained partnership effort that often yields the type of improvements in teaching, learning, and community support that we all want.

Reflection #2

1. List at least 10 dimensions of leadership that are especially important in sustaining school reform. If appropriate, sort them into categories.

2. Rate each dimension on a scale:
   1 = extremely important
   2 = important
   3 = desirable, but perhaps not essential

3. For each dimension that you rated "extremely important," write a sentence or two to explain your rating.

Forum participants came up with hundreds of different ways to identify key dimensions of leadership for sustaining reform. Their responses fall into five general categories:

- **Partnership and voice**. Effective reform leaders cultivate a broad definition of community and consider the contribution that every member can make to helping children meet challenging standards. They hear the voices of many stakeholders--families, businesses, and other groups and institutions. Their ability to develop plans that reflect the legitimate influence of others draws in many authentic partners, whose personal convictions as well as community spirit energize participation. They look for evidence of widespread participation in important aspects of change. Establishing

partnerships and listening to a chorus of voices are leadership skills that permeate many aspects of reform.

- **Vision and values**. Effective reform leaders are dependable and committed "keepers of the dream" of student success generated by faculties, families, and the community. They know that realizing the dream hinges in part on applying certain agreed-upon values to decision making. They know that the dream is continuously evolving and that it belongs to everyone. In different ways they ask themselves daily: does this decision help realize the dream?

- **Knowledge and daring**. Effective reform leaders develop relevant information bases and cultivate human resources to minimize failure while encouraging risk taking. They study, count, send staff to workshops, bring in experts and mentors, consult their own insight and experience, and in a hundred other ways increase capacity to make good decisions. Then they step into the unknown and encourage staff to do likewise. Their risks are carefully calculated to push the boundaries of what is known and commonly done without threatening long-term success.

- **Savvy and persistence**. Effective reform leaders know how the system works and they can take a lot of flak (if they must). They know how to interact with the central office, the local community, and others outside the school. They know how certain school structures nurture or discourage attitudes and behavior. They can put up with resistance inside or outside the building, but they eventually find ways to win cooperation. They are good managers. They monitor their understanding of the nature and operations of systems, and they maintain a network of supporters to lean on in times of particular stress.

- **Personal qualities**. Effective reform leaders put to good use an array of personal qualities that many feel may be innate, but are often underutilized. A well-developed sense of humor was often mentioned as a priceless asset. Leaders use language that signals their understanding of human variation and the ways their own gifts can be used well.

In the sections below, we describe in greater detail how the participants spoke of these dimensions of leadership.

Partnership and Voice

Sustaining reform means hearing many voices in the school community, prizing their diversity, confirming their legitimacy, and allowing their influence to be expressed in plans and dreams, according to forum participants. Good educational leaders elicit insights from many stakeholders in and outside of the school, nurture planning strategies that take their concerns into account, and engage a lot of partners in the work of making the dreams come true. Over the long haul, effective leaders show respect for diversity, hear (give "air time" to) many voices, make sense of the message that each voice delivers, sort and screen and adjust for bias, so that each person feels heard. This capacity to listen, accommodate, and give credit encourages others to consider themselves part of the solution and to become active contributors. Sustaining reform means building

it in collaboration not only with school staff but also with families and other community members who want to be partners in creating conditions for students' success.

Recruiting Reluctant Reformers

When I arrived at City High School, the chair of the English department was the resident scoffer. Arms folded, eyes glazed, poised with car keys in hand, he endured staff meetings. On good days, he graded papers. I began to ask his opinion and demonstrated that I valued it. I asked him to serve in a major leadership role in school strategic planning, insisted that he make the final decision among two candidates for a job in his department, and begged him to chair a long-term study group. That was over a period of three years.

By the middle of the second year, he was asking for help to use the computers and other high-tech equipment he had scorned the year before. He began to shame others into learning about it. A confirmed college-prep teacher, he took an interest in at-risk students and insisted that others attend student support team meetings on their behalf. This year, he responded to a need identified in the long-term study and organized an ethnic literature course with at-risk students in mind; he now claims this as his favorite class. With others in his department, he has proposed new graduation requirements, which they see as a need identified by citizens in our community. He is agonizing over catching two top students who were cheating, when that may have brought him vindictive pleasure four years ago.

None of these changes were mandated for him in a professional development plan. He found a place of worth among his peers, and he discovered that the administration wanted to hear--and act on--his opinion. He blossomed when he was valued, trusted, urged, but never pushed too quickly or shamed for his poor attitude.

High School Principal
Mid-Atlantic State

Many empowering traits fall into this category, to the extent that they can be understood to mean "giving voice" to others or making room for multiple agendas. Dimensions that involve actual partnerships with outsiders or between departments are also included. Effective leaders do not simply aim to change or educate people--they try to understand people's motivation and goals and encourage their inclinations to be actively and responsibly engaged. Effective leaders promote a total team effort, involving staff, families, and communities in support of students' learning.

As a result of this rare ability to really hear others, successful leaders keep reform vital by making adjustments that are responsive to a great variety of interests and concerns, without losing track of the common agenda. Partnerships emerge because stakeholders see the bit that they promoted become part of the whole; they claim their share of the work cheerfully, because it gives expression to their own sense of what is right for a school to do. Leaders do not prevail by being wishy-washy. On the contrary, they remain fixed on the vision. However, their capacity to integrate different ideas into a coherent program provides others with attractive opportunities to become active school boosters.

Leadership skills and activities that engage partners and make harmony of many voices may be sorted into three general categories:

- Listening to and understanding others
- Empowering others through recognition and acceptance
- Taking advantage of diversity

Listening to and understanding others. Put simply by a Kentucky principal, "A good leader recognizes how to include everyone." Empathy and perceptiveness reveal how best to approach others, while openness and patience encourage them to take the initiative when necessary. Effective communication skills forge bonds, nurture relationships, and inform attempts to mediate. Staff and community members equally benefit from the leader's skills in this area.

Explaining the success of shared decision making at one school, a participant from Maine commented, "Teachers bought into the process because of the principal's willingness to listen and to be challenged without getting defensive." A Kentucky principal claimed, "In six years, one good idea came from me. Most of the good ideas I get come from teachers."

Being active listeners, recognizing concerns, and creating a climate of honesty keep school leaders in tune with the way other staff members feel about the school program. Furthermore, these behaviors generate an encompassing perspective on current events and a deep pool of ideas for solving problems.

Participants often credited their good relationships with parents and community members to this propensity to listen well and offer opportunities for those outside the school to provide input on school reform. One Kentucky principal arranged a schedule with his faculty so that at least twice a year every family received a personal telephone call from him and the staff, updating news of their children's accomplishments. A colleague in the state told the story of a principal who annually "organized a 'get to know' party, with teachers serving punch and refreshments in the five housing projects [that were home to most of the students]. Principals have to believe parents can make a difference, that they are wanted and valued, and principals convey this by what they say or do." This concept is so important that the United States Secretary of Education has formed a Partnership for Family Involvement in Education.

Partnership for
Family Involvement in Education

The Partnership for Family Involvement in Education is a grassroots coalition of more than 650 national education, parent, community, and religious organizations, schools, and employers. Launched by U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley in September 1994, the partnership supports the idea that education is everybody's business through two long-term activities: "America Goes Back to School," and "READ*WRITE*NOW!" Information and materials are available by calling 1-800-USA-LEARN or visiting www.ed.gov on the Internet.

According to forum participants, a successful long-term reformer does not just roost quietly in the school office listening to those who drop in to chat (although that is a key aspect of leadership). In addition, the reformer takes his or her "ear" on the road, seeking out the voices whose combined messages create a complete view of problems and solutions that can be addressed by the school program.

Empowering others through recognition and acceptance. While participants recognized that being good listeners provided them with valuable insights, they also knew that listening is a means of empowering others. Social institutions as large and complex as schools can render some people virtually invisible and mute their distinctive voices. Confusion about how the system works, lack of formal education or proficiency in English, or a perceived lack of relative social status may cause some parents and community members to feel that their concerns and questions are not important. The sound and the size of politically or economically mighty members of a community might overshadow others. Sustaining reform demands that leaders recognize the legitimacy of everyone's concerns and the value of everyone's resources. In the words of a Floridian, "You keep others involved by letting them know that they are valued... both as human beings and as resources. Let them know that their opinions matter." A Californian commented that "parents have a lot of voice, and I feel protected by that."

In addition to listening, participants recommended other strategies for learning how others feel. "You need to be able to see things in your students' eyes and in your teachers' eyes," said one Kansan. Climate is key, said a principal from Virginia; it "should support honest, open, and direct relationships among staff."

Empowerment may cut two ways: most participants noted that an ongoing part of their work was cultivating the support of those with political clout. Adding new constituencies from previously disenfranchised groups in the community is bound to make it harder to gain consensus around key issues. However, elevating the level of complexity in this way was not viewed as a negative development. One hardworking innovator in a multilingual California community seemed to relish the work; she claimed, "The political task of winning trust is exciting."

Empowerment

The term "empowerment" came up again and again in these conversations with experts, each time with a different nuance of meaning set by the context. In this report, three dimensions of empowerment are described. First is the power engendered by being heard, speaking in one's own voice, which is described in this section. Leaders who sustain reform solicit the input of many voices. Second is the power that comes from being knowledgeable in areas of common concern, discussed in the section about "Knowledge and Daring." Long-term leaders promote learning among all members of the school community as the foundation of risk taking. Third is the power that comes from having institutional authority, which is described in the section on "Savvy and Persistence." Effective leaders distribute both authority and responsibility throughout the community.

Taking advantage of diversity.
Successful long-term leaders viewed diversity as a resource, and they acquired the knowledge and skill needed to take advantage of it. As a Georgia principal stated, "You must be able to recognize the strengths of others and utilize them for the good of the organization." Participants used the language of a dozen different "typing" systems to characterize useable differences among the children

and adults with whom they worked. "That teacher was a visual learner," one would say and go on to tell a story demonstrating a good way to make a point with that person. "This part of the community was very tight-knit," said another and gave an example of how to make the most of existing communication networks. Personality types, learning styles, levels and kinds of giftedness, cultural and ethnic differences, approaches to instruction, outside interests--all of these were mentioned as potential resources for some collective activity.

Mirroring teachers' concern with offering students individually challenging and engaging instruction was participants' concern with capitalizing on variations among faculty and community members for the benefit of their common work. Creating work groups with the right "chemistry" and providing assignments well-matched with teachers' interests and gifts were expressions of leaders' attention to boosting effort and stability by taking individual differences into account. Developing partnerships based on accurate perceptions of the interests and abilities of all relevant members of the school community is one cornerstone of long-term leadership success, according to many forum participants. These partnerships create the conversations that generate shared visions of great schools and adoption of the common values necessary to develop such schools.

Vision and Values

According to participants, sustaining reform requires that educational leaders have a clear vision of the kind of school they want to have and operate consistently according to values and beliefs tied to that vision. These leaders seldom claim to have invented the vision or the underlying values and beliefs; instead, they perceive themselves to be "keepers of the dream." They embrace it wholeheartedly and make sure that everyone else does too. As one leader from Kentucky said:

> Having a vision, knowing what your purpose is, is really important. When we started, it was a rocky road for us. The leaders knew what the school had to be, but a lot of people had baggage that made it hard to get there. Fortunately, some people had tenacity, commitment, and vision.

Developing and maintaining the vision challenges a leader's ability to determine how well what is happening matches reasonable expectations at a given stage of implementation. In addition, when faced with problems, effective leaders see multiple solutions that preserve the spirit of the vision. They find it important to study the nature of vision and recognize the stages of its development. A principal from Florida characterized one seductive diversion: "If you get too much into the minutiae, you lose touch with your mission." Keepers of the dream take a broad view of the school.

A collective, student-centered dream. Although the details of participants' visions varied, each put students squarely in the center. Said one New Hampshire principal, "Your mission statement has to be really simple. The focus has to be the kids." Strong leaders made a commitment to equity regarding both children and colleagues; that is, they supported visions growing out of convictions that all students can learn and all staff members can make a contribution to student learning if they choose to.

Most shared the sentiment of a California principal: "It has to be a collective vision; principals don't change schools by themselves. The principal is the wide-angle lens to keep the whole vision in view for the whole school." Furthermore, said a New Yorker, "the vision is crafted

collaboratively, with generosity of spirit." There is not a signature attached to the vision; it belongs to everyone. Participants advocated building a sense of purpose in the whole staff and identifying a set of values central to the staff, parents, students, and community.

A Vision of Restructuring: The "Amen" Experience

I truly believe that an effective principal needs to be like an effective minister or pastor, with the capacity to inspire in others the sense of commitment and passion that will carry the change for the long haul. When the staff, like a congregation, comes to that collective and spontaneous "amen," that is a magical moment. Here is my story.

After three years of team building, sharing power and decision making, after struggling to find the right process to prepare the staff to move to each new level, along came Senate Bill 1274, the school restructuring grant program. For me this seemed like the right vehicle to use [to achieve our goals]. The staff was unsure at first, but I kept pushing, and finally a cadre of staff went to the training workshop [to learn how to write a 1274 proposal].

They came back both inspired and frustrated: inspired by the possibilities and frustrated by the short timeline to put a proposal together. The staff as a whole decided to go for it, to come to consensus on a proposal that would turn our school upside down if implemented. In trying to craft the vision, the staff and I struggled with terms, philosophies, language, and more. A subcommittee gathered our thoughts, and went away to try to put them into some appropriate prose. They came back with one version, received response, then went away. I participated on the subcommittee and as a member of the staff.

Finally, the subcommittee came to the staff with a proposal that became the vision for the whole school. As they read the vision, there was this collective "yes!" like an "amen" at church. I had chills and tears, as did others. That vision, that passion burned in my soul and, I believe, in the souls of many (if not all) of those in that room that day. Now, three and one-half years later, that passion still burns at our school.

Keith Nomura, Principal
An Urban California School District

Maintaining fitness. As those whose role and responsibilities provide the most comprehensive view of "what is," its relation to "what may be," and the extent to which everyone is deciding and acting according to agreed-upon values, principals saw themselves often as the only ones who could see the big picture. Hence, they identified self-assessment as an important strategy to use in evaluating their own performance and progress. Critical reflection on one's own performance and on the performance of one's work group was seen to be a valuable asset in making school dreams come true. "I am the protector of the vision in the face of all kinds of external pressure," said one California principal; taking care of one's own integrity and preserving personal commitment are essential for coping with such pressure.

In the opinion of many, sustaining leaders cultivate particular qualities of character and use special skills to keep the school vision vital and responsive. Successful leadership comes from self-awareness, courage, patience, trust, wisdom, honesty, and openness, they said, and good leaders set about to acquire these qualities in a fairly deliberate way.

Realizing the dream obliges school community members to govern their own behavior by the values implicit in the new order. As one Pennsylvania principal put it, "Leaders have to facilitate the process of developing and defining a meaningful mission statement and putting it into practice." On the individual plane, according to forum participants, good leaders model the agreed-upon values, acting deliberately, with a positive, enthusiastic attitude. They try to be fair and consistent, to initiate rather than only react, to make connections across experiences, and to expect great things from everyone. They examine learning outcomes and organizational priorities according to the demands of the vision. Recognizing that respect for others must be predicated on respect for oneself--and that self-respect is a resource that requires constant renewal--they make time to take care of themselves, personally and professionally. However, they avoid acting as if achieving their school's vision is a way to get a ticket punched on the way to better things.

Helping coworkers adopt the values implicit in the vision is another key leadership behavior. Telling the story of one school's reform, a Maine principal reported that "staff looked at our own value system as professional educators and came to our 'core beliefs' by consensus. The faculty motto was: 'We are all in this together.'" Once the values are identified, good leaders act on them. This includes helping everyone feel they belong--parents, staff, and community members with an interest in the school's vision. As plans evolve and new activities develop, leaders guide others in finding ways to use individual talents, balancing individual needs with the needs of the whole school. While keeping people focused on the vision, leaders who sustain reform affirm progress and celebrate success.

One irony that participants mentioned often concerned the fundamental ambiguity of some aspects of change. Said one, "As visionaries, we don't know what it's going to look like in the end." To go where no one has gone before is ultimately to be surprised in one way or another, no matter how well you have done your homework. As much as they know that schools need some kind of stability to get from one day, month, and year to the next, leaders who are successful change agents are ruefully conscious that they cannot predict where they will end up.

Knowledge and Daring

Experience teaches that sustaining reform requires both knowledge and willingness to take risks. Effective leaders develop the foundation of information, understanding, and skill that underpins successful change. They make the last step into the unknown as safe and well researched as it can be. They speak of risk taking in the context of developing solid information about issues of adoption and adaptation. They speak of research, observations, discussion groups, training, education, or other active cultivation of knowledge and skills as the foundation of innovation and the source of actual power to change things. They refer to using mentors or other advisors or arranging for mentors for others.

Making All Learning Meaningful

Vision is the anchor of all decision making. My story centers on the school's effort to change the lunchroom. Teachers had been complaining about discipline problems at lunch, and they suggested, as a remedy, handing out stickers and stars for good behavior. I had to steer them away from this superficial decision, because our school vision is to make every activity a meaningful learning experience. The teachers agreed to rethink the lunchroom issue, and they formed a committee to do so. The first thing they did was go to the lunchroom to gather more information. They decided that one of the main problems was that the lunchroom was "ugly and an unpleasant place to eat." The committee decided to turn the lunchroom into a "restaurant," and to let students figure out how. They thought that once they provided students with meaningful learning in a meaningful context, behavior and learning would improve.

The staff decided to take the worst class, in terms of behavior, and ask them to tackle this project. Their goal was to prove that student motivation would increase and that these "problem students" could become involved students if they were exposed to meaningful learning. Community members were also called in to join the effort. Teachers, students, and community members met, broke into groups, and chose "Italy" as a theme for their restaurant. The students began the process of turning their lunchroom into an Italian restaurant. They studied Italian history, art, decor, cooking, architecture, and language. They used budgeting and other math skills in comparison shopping to buy tablecloths at a bargain price. The project quickly spread to other grade levels and soon the whole school was involved in lunchroom reform projects. Before the grand opening, the students conducted classroom presentations at each grade level on "restaurant behavior"--behavior traits that they as a group had come up with.

The main lesson of this experience was that the school vision was always at the center of the reform effort. I helped steer teachers toward the vision and supported student ownership of the project.

Mary Ellen McBride, Principal
Pittsburgh (PA) Public Schools

One California award-winner gave this advice:

> You have to collect research and information and create your own plan, based on the skills of staff, community, and school. You have to look at all of it and ask, 'How do the pieces fit together?' and implement some sort of plan.

Asked how the faculty might describe them, one of the administrators responded, "My staff would say that I make them very uncomfortable, because I ask hard questions that force them to stretch beyond what they have already done." Another in the group added a positive spin to that thought: "They see me as someone who creates opportunities for professional development and collaboration."

Everyone spoke of risk taking, and their ideas called to one Georgian's mind a comment attributed to hockey player Wayne Gretsky: "You miss 100 percent of the shots you never take." A participant from California summed it up with a comment that "risk taking involves making strategic moves."

Discussions addressed three general aspects of knowledge and daring:

- Increasing the leaders' own knowledge base, in order to respond to new challenges
- Providing accessible opportunities for others to acquire new knowledge related to the school's vision, in order to increase the organization's capacity to operate effectively
- Going "outside the box," breaking new ground, refusing to let fear of failure dominate decision making--and making it safe for others to be creative as well

Increasing their own knowledge base. Innovators who endure make a strong and public commitment to advancing their own professional knowledge and skill, observed the forum participants. According to a principal from Florida, the first step in a new undertaking is conducting a "developmental assessment: knowing where you are and determining your goal and how long it will take to get it done." Reading professional journals and books is part of the regular process of learning, but real pros also use their practice to inform a theoretical rationale that is a career-long work-in-progress. Personal history can be another valuable resource, a California veteran reminds us:

> Who you are is a result of experiences--including adversity. What you learn helps you become better all the time--it's an evolving process. It's why, when you make a mistake, you admit it, so the staff can see that you're a learner too.

In short, leadership "preparation" is never complete.

Those whose leadership sustains reform bring their understanding of the issues and evidence germane to teaching and learning as a resource to the school. A new middle school principal with a distinguished record of professional accomplishment confessed, "For me, the change happened when I began to immerse myself in all the new learning theory. My behavioristic background had to go out the window. I could dump it, and I was free..." Good leaders are open to innovation, but they retain a firm grasp on what is known to be true about the effectiveness of various practices. They have a general sense of the diversity of students' needs, and many are technologically adept as well. In addition to being the "lead learners," they are often highly regarded instructional experts.

Familiarity with the different kinds of assessment that certify a school's health is another strength of enduring school leaders. They have a sound, basic understanding of student assessment in general and of the local assessment practices in particular. One principal who had sold her multilingual community on the value of using portfolios and other "authentic" ways to demonstrate learning discovered a mind-boggling challenge: "I had to learn enough about assessment to report achievement in a different way than CTBS [Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills]." It was more easily said than done, she found, but worth the cost in the long term. Innovators who stay the course know how to collect and analyze data relevant to school programs. They ensure that teacher assessment is fair and helpful, whatever system is in place. Finally, good leaders know how to assess their own performance and do so regularly.

Learning Together About Assessment

In 1990, during my second year as a principal at Ben Franklin, an ongoing concern of the staff resurfaced. Over the year, despite a variety of programs and efforts, the students at Ben were always at the low end of the scale when CTBS scores were published. Although they usually demonstrated significant growth, the scores remained below average. Teachers kept asking, "What can we do to show that kids are learning?"

One day a friend of mine said, "The teachers at your school do some wonderful things. Have you considered having students keep portfolios?" This spark of an idea set me researching and discussing possibilities with teachers.

I began finding out about portfolios and assessments and searching for models of instruction at the school that would fit into this model. On a staff development day in March, we discussed teacher concerns about assessment and demonstration of achievement. Teachers looked at research articles about alternative assessment and discussed the issues. Several teachers from different grades and content areas presented types of existing work that could be foundations for portfolios (focussing on what was important for all students). After further discussion, each teacher was asked to comment in writing and orally how they felt about the idea: Would they be willing to try it? What were their concerns and needs? I promised that we would not do this unless everyone agreed.

Surprise! They did. We began creating student portfolios in September of 1990. The process included:

- Constant research and information gathering
- Providing supplies and materials as needed
- Time to evaluate products at the end of each semester
- Time to analyze the process and make revisions
- Annual review of results and decision whether to continue
- Addition of new components such as parent activities and exit exhibitions for eighth graders

This is now our fifth year of a highly fulfilling project that is actively supported by staff, students, and parents. It **still takes ongoing information gathering, encouragement, professional development, and revision**.

Dianne Meltesen, Principal
Benjamin Franklin Middle School
San Francisco, CA

Helping others to acquire reform-related knowledge and skills. Although they hold themselves accountable for keeping their knowledge on the cutting edge, effective leaders also invest in capacity-building activities for the rest of the faculty. "I am a gatherer of resources for the staff," said a Los Angeles leader fresh from a ceremony in Washington, where the president himself laid on

the laurels. "I know it's hard for teachers to reconcile that what they've been doing wasn't okay," said another. "Even if we believe that we can improve, it's hard for them to pull it off. Staff development is important."

In Kentucky the state reform program provided a challenge to immediate action while providing some support for faculty growth. Leaders there viewed active learning as the foundation of change as evidenced in the words of three participants:

> When we first started, everyone was interested in primary school, so we studied and found the answer.
>
> We're in the first year, and the staff want to go everywhere. The curriculum committee wanted to work out details, but first they needed to know the big picture.
>
> [The plan] allowed us to visit other places, pick the good ideas, choose among options. The key was in recognizing our need to see these things in action.

A California dreamer heading a successful innovation said, "Professionalization of the school culture was key. Older teachers did not think much about practice [in our school]." Seasoned practitioners may well have settled into a set of routines that made some sense under the old regime and dealt effectively with idiosyncracies of that system. It may sometimes be harder to win their cooperation for change. Many participants viewed mentoring and peer coaching as essential ingredients of reform. They described the importance of intellectual honesty and mutual respect. Faculty meetings, drop-in visits, and even hallway encounters became venues for discussion of the value of ideas and strategies and the results of experimentation.

Participants did not think that capacity-building should be a strictly spare-time exercise or solely focused on academics. They found ways to integrate it into regular working hours and to include opportunities to learn the ropes of new roles and responsibilities as well as curriculum and instruction. They cultivated restructuring plans that provided for teacher learning. They depended on the expertise of faculty in various areas. They arranged for peer observation in school and off-campus. They stimulated development of teacher leadership skills and supported teacher research.

This work on their own learning and that of the faculty was the only foundation strong enough to safeguard school progress in the midst of change, in the view of the forum participants. Knowledge and skill served as the safety nets when leaders and their faculties stepped boldly into new educational frontiers.

Taking risks, breaking new ground. "True grit" might be the best way to characterize what powers those first steps toward reform. Despite preparation and partnerships, vision and commitment, participants said that moving past the traditional, safe--sometimes plodding--ways of doing school takes energy and courage. In the first days of change, innovators bask in the glow of limelight and often benefit from the contributions of outsiders who support the new regime. After the first flush of victory, though, keeping on takes a different kind of courage, and the daily grind once again becomes a force of inertia to be overcome. The risk taking of implementation happens in baby steps; done well, they may add up to a rewarding journey into new realms; done badly, they inevitably circle back to the way things used to be.

A Virginia leader spoke about the need to frame risks carefully to keep the possible negative impact of experiments to a minimum: "You have to be able to fail, but you also have to have significant successes at the beginning. I refer to them as short-leash successes. You need to have constructed experiences that are, in a sense, risk free." That is, good leaders may create a climate of experimentation that produces "safe zones" where early attempts to try new approaches have every support necessary for success. Furthermore, another Virginian added, prudence helps: "I plot what I'm going to do. I take intelligent risks. I make sure that I don't have too much change at once. If the teachers aren't ready, then I'll back off."

A Californian reminded the participants that "The school's culture and climate influence willingness to take risks ... a good leader cultivates a climate of experimentation." The theme of adding to the professional knowledge base permeated discussions of risk taking. "This isn't just about process; it's also about outcomes," said a principal from Virginia. "You have to show people data in order to convince them to stay the course."

Voicing the opinion of one discussion group whose members claimed to be iconoclasts, despite their power suits and impeccably orthodox credentials, one participant said, "We have some victories, but we break a lot of rules." What appears to be the case is that they know the system well--the school itself, the district, and the community. This knowledge enables them to judge pretty well what rules and expectations can be challenged, which strategies are the right ones to mount the challenge, and when to persist in the face of resistance.

Savvy and Persistence

Participants say that sustaining reform requires exceptional facility in working with and around the important systems. Successful leaders know how to take advantage of resources, how to respond to reasonable demands, how to create organizational arrangements that nurture competence and support new activities. They are not easily diverted by opposition or foot-dragging. Without being preoccupied with detail, they understand the nuts and bolts dimensions of the institution. They refer to organizational structures and their relation to behavior or program health, as well as to fortitude--the ability to persevere through resistance, respond to crises, take flak.

Analysis of forum participants' comments shows four overlapping arenas of leadership in which their knowledge and understanding of organizational arrangements makes it possible for change to take root and thrive. These arenas of expertise include:

- Managing day-to-day school issues
- Managing long-term school issues
- Maintaining a good relationship with the central office
- Maintaining a good relationship with the community

As one principal from Virginia observed:

Principals have to be able to survive the politics of the building, school board, and other community members in order to be successful leaders. They need to build a base with businesses, teachers, students, parents, and other community members in order to weather the winds of politics.

Daily school management. "You do what you have to do to run that school," said one Georgian, with the goal of maintaining the conditions necessary for teachers to be able to teach. Savvy in this domain is multidimensional. Among the required skills that participants listed are those in planning, reporting, staffing, budgeting, delegating, prioritizing, managing conflict, and celebrating success. Firmness and fairness are highly prized, as are poise and civility. The daily work of leading makes many demands. "You have to juggle a lot of balls at the same time: custodial issues, major discipline... You don't have only to do curriculum or whatever. You need a good background of general knowledge of administration and the things that go into it," explained a Kentucky educator.

One seasoned professional elaborated on the unexpected challenges to order: "I have a good example. There was a bomb threat during my observation of French class. I had to redefine my priorities that day!" Making it through each day, flexing to accommodate reality but holding on tight to the collective vision, demands in-depth knowledge of the resources available to solve problems and quick, perceptive decisiveness in applying that knowledge.

Keeping one's eyes on the prize is crucial, according to a California veteran: "Every day I remind myself what it is I want. Instead of reacting, I communicate in a way that promotes my agenda. I think, 'What is my goal? How do I want this to go?'" A listener asked, "Do staff know you do that?" "Yes," she said, "I tell them."

Long-term school management. Staying the course of reform requires much more than simple agility, according to participants. It requires setting up and working within a system of structures that capitalize on the energy and interests of faculty and parents, provide for thoughtful and professional conduct, and hold people accountable for their actions. Knowing staff, students, and families well and taking their concerns and strengths seriously is one important dimension of sound, foresightful management. As one Kentucky reformer said, "A great principal has to really know her staff, to be in tune, to be in touch." Using institutional structures to support reform activities is a second dimension. "It's not only team building," said a Virginian. "You have to get the housekeeping things in order."

Savvy about human relations seems to be a top priority. Validating people for what they do well, building on people's present skills, and accepting that change is difficult are valued strategies for engaging and motivating others in long-term reforms. Balancing the relevant interests of stakeholders supports their commitment to partnership.

However, as a bilingual special educator from Colorado commented, "There needs to be a balance between trusting that everyone is going to do the job and needing to stand on the line." A great deal of the leadership exercised by these veterans involved winning cooperation and serving as a cheerleader for staff initiatives, but the bottom line is about responsibility. In the words of one Kentucky principal, "A good principal will get rid of bad teachers." Said another, "I do all the evaluating and supervising; the teachers share the rest." Order and civility in schools are sustained by agreements about structure and mutual accountability. The forum participants described two aspects of the proper exercise of the right to exclude anyone from the school staff. First, the majority held

Effective Use of Prescribed Personnel Practices:
Making the System Work for Children

Dr. T. was a music teacher in our district. He had more than 30 years of experience and taught music in our school once a week. Children and parents raised concerns that he used instructional time to complain about parking and to discuss movies and restaurants he had visited. He also called children "dumb" and used phrases such as "who died and made you the music teacher?"

I met with Dr. T. and informed him of these concerns. I asked him to devote all instructional time to music and to use appropriate language with children. I said I would visit his class to insure that these conditions were met. And, in the next several weeks, whenever I visited, lessons were appropriately taught. At Dr. T.'s request, we then met with his supervisor. I reiterated my conditions. Then he brought in his union representative. Dr. T. said that, since he had taught music for more than 30 years, if students did not like the way instruction was delivered, they could quit music. I stated that he had a responsibility to effectively teach music to all children.

Many parents brought concerns to me and put them in writing, as did two teachers who had witnessed Dr. T. speaking inappropriately to children. Once, when practicing for a citywide program, the children became restless, and Dr. T. told them that important people like the Superintendent and the Mayor would make their families move if they didn't do a good job.

When I asked Dr. T. to meet with me again, he gave me a slip of paper with his lawyer's name on it. I informed my supervisor and wrote a memo asking Dr. T. to meet with me and my supervisor--he would have a right to representation as well. Dr. T. ultimately met with me in the Assistant Superintendent's Office. Although Dr. T refused to address the issue directly, there was enough documentation for the Assistant Superintendent to instruct him to correct the problem. Through his union representative, Dr. T. volunteered to transfer to another school. I consented to this decision. Dr. T. helped us with our graduation program, and I wrote him a complimentary memo, copied to the Assistant Superintendent.

When Dr. T. chose early retirement at the end of the school year, I realized that I could be an effective administrator and do what is necessary to ensure that children's educational needs are served.

Annette Lim, Principal
Sutro Elementary School
San Francisco, CA

that willingness to fire an incompetent teacher (following appropriate action to remediate deficient performance) was clear evidence of having professional standards and commitment. Second, a solid minority advocated sharing that chore with faculty. Demonstrating that some paradoxes of shared

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decision making are suffered from coast to coast, a New Yorker from a school famous for its collaborative approach echoed the sentiments of a Californian, who said:

> If we shared responsibility for creating a community of high expectations and defining levels of professional performance, why then is it my solo responsibility to issue marching orders? Even if I retain formal authority as a matter of contract, the community shares the moral responsibility to communicate its finding that one of its members was inadequate [in performance].

Many participants agreed that long-term school management was ultimately a matter of maintaining focus. Said one seasoned Kentucky leader:

> You look at your list. Whatever the issue is, you deal with that, maybe you delegate. The next day you pick up the list again and reorganize it around your primary focus. You constantly remind yourself: I'm here for curriculum and instruction. You talk about it to your staff, central office, everyone....you have to be careful not to get distracted.

Part of the nitty-gritty in management is creating well-defined communication systems and roles. Informal communications and role flexibility retain their everyday usefulness, but formal communication guidelines protect against development of too many inside channels, on one hand, and role conflict or overload, on the other. Leaders who succeed in the long haul are able to keep access to information and decision making as open and equitable as it needs to be. People know whom and when to ask for the straight scoop. Leaders who sustain the energy and initiative that reform demands make their stance with respect to creating new roles or deleting old ones to support the collective vision, rather than the status quo. According to a principal in New Hampshire, "School reform has to take place over a long period of time. You have to survive political pressures and your own personal pressures." Adjusting the organization to sustain new approaches--keeping in mind the strengths and weaknesses of human nature in general and the relevant staff members in particular--is one essential ingredient of reform.

Good relations with district office. "There are survival skills that we learn after being in the trenches," explained one California principal, and these survival skills include knowing how to get and keep the support of the district's central office. As another Californian explained:

> Sustaining change requires quite a bit of political savvy. When you first come in, all the momentum is for the *status quo*. You have to find toeholds to get started. You have to search out ammunition. You have to ask, "How can I put a political spin on it?

Maintaining the good graces of the superintendent's office and the school board requires a two-pronged approach, according to participants. First, the best defense is a good offense: timely response to predictable requests, regular announcements of progress and accomplishments, and demonstration of familiarity with the district's big picture and the school's role in it show appropriate regard for the "front office." Sustaining leaders take care of this aspect of business, because it ought to be done and because doing it buys time and space for the school's individual agenda. Second, maintaining the integrity of the school program requires protecting it from interference. Terms such as "buffering from central office interference" arose often in discussion of district relations, for

example, from a Coloradan: "We need measures to insulate us, so there can be sustained efforts, not a response to every new fad. We need time to focus." Protecting the vision in the face of outside meddling was a prime concern of reformers. Among the most intrusive meddlers are those from the central office, in the view of some school-based leaders. Fierce loyalty to the school as the site of reform seems to lead many principals (even those who will ultimately themselves choose the superintendency) to construe the demands of district administrators as a source of distraction.

Good relations with the community. Finally, long-term reformers know how to connect with the community, using insightful strategies to ensure that all stakeholders feel positively engaged. A Kentucky principal advised, "Pay very close attention to the community. Make sure the community understands the change." Celebrating success, taking time to inform parents and others about good things happening at school, making the school a visible participant in communitywide events--these are ways that notable leaders win community support. A fan of leadership in one school gave an example of a creative approach to selling reform activities:

> The principal takes an active role in teaching. She holds evening children's musical performances--but then uses a few minutes before the performance to teach one small part of educational reform. For example, she might show the writing or math portfolio or demonstrate a science experiment.

Making effective use of conventional avenues of communication with the public--issuing periodic press releases, for instance, or exhibiting children's art work or portfolios in the library--and piggybacking on events that draw the community to the school can win support and engender community pride in students' achievements. As one participant said simply, "Good press and good publicity have been good protection."

Personal Qualities

Participants often talked about the role of personal qualities, such as charisma or a sense of humor, in leadership effectiveness. They expressed the conviction that some important qualities could not be acquired, but were inborn. Usually, pressing the point resulted in the insight that some traits made the job a lot easier, although every leader did not necessarily have the same personality profile. However, real debate surrounded this issue in most regional forums. Said one high school principal from California, for example, "I think you can teach some aspects of being a change agent, but it's a thousand times more art than science. We must start to identify people with these [desirable] qualities." His colleague replied without missing a beat, "I have worked with ... administrators and staff that I am pushing to develop these qualities. I take an active role and push and push and push..." Without resolving the nature/nurture aspect of this dimension of leadership, participants did mention an array of personal qualities that make leadership more effective or leaders easier to follow.

Passion, humor, and empathy came up the most often. "Passion motivates 95 percent of what I do," explained a Missouri high school administrator. "There's no growth without fire," contributed an ESL teacher from Oregon. Strength of character and general maturity were also characterized as essential. Patience is key. As one Georgian said, "You have to be patient; if you try to move too fast, you will leave the rest behind." Good leaders have both wisdom and common sense, and they are viewed as trustworthy and reliable. Many credit their success to creativity, although others credit the creativity of their faculties. Furthermore, "If you're not sensitive," as one Missourian put it,

"you're going to be lost in dealing with children." And, as a principal from Georgia said, "To summarize, you need courage and competence."

The obvious variation in the personalities and temperaments of the forum participants suggests that one can become a notably successful school leader given any of a considerable array of gifts and tendencies. It was apparent that these leaders understood the value of their own resources and made good use of them in sustaining reform.

Research Connections

The principals assembled for this forum shared their professional experiences, concluding that the art of exercising leadership in the context of sustained school reform is really a combination of eclectic skills, abilities, experiences, and personal traits. Throughout this chapter we have used the five general categories of vision and values, partnership and voice, knowledge and daring, savvy and persistence, and personal qualities to highlight factors that these outstanding leaders cited as integral to their success at sustaining reform in the schools they lead.

A brief review of selected recent research confirms and extends the insights revealed in participants' anecdotes and explanations. For instance, in *Reshaping the Principalship* (1994, p. 32), Murphy and Louis attribute the success of reform endeavors to the principal's direct efforts to model and reinforce behaviors related to the common vision and shared values. According to Sergiovanni (1994, p. 170), a school's vision must ensure that students, parents, teachers, and principals all become school leaders in some way. Effective principals focus and maintain their school's vision, says former Superintendent Richard Wallace (in Lynn, 1994), keeping essential goals in mind and distractions to a minimum.

Lieberman's work (1988) documents some of the issues that arise when principals undertake collaborative leadership with teachers. There's plenty of leadership opportunity to go around--principals don't need to do it all. Often teachers' concerns may be better addressed by peers than by an administrator and empowering teachers to act as problem solvers is often quite effective. However, delegation may be tricky, and teachers' willingness to participate sometimes depends on their relationship with the principal. Murphy and Louis (1994) found that if teachers perceive principals to be open, facilitative, and supportive, teachers' participation increases. Modeling collaborative relationships and acting like colleagues rather than supervisors when the situation permits cultivate teachers' willingness to share authority and responsibility. Sergiovanni (1994) describes leadership as:

> the exercise of wit and will, principle and passion, time and talent, and purpose and power in a way that allows the group to increase the likelihood that shared goals will be accomplished (p. 170).

Leaders must be willing to accept the risk and ambiguity that develops as they embrace new visions, based on new knowledge. New ideas threaten staff accustomed to old constraints, but offer exciting opportunities for those willing to put the visions into practice (Murphy and Louis, 1994). If we expect students to be more adventuresome in their thinking, then the adults must model risk taking. According to Lieberman (1988), principals who offer to share the responsibility with teachers can encourage the teachers to apply new strategies to improve their practice.

During the middle decades of the twentieth century, attraction to the "cult of efficiency" led school administration away from a central concern with teaching and learning. "Management," not "learning," was the byword of this era. Today the pendulum has reversed; substantive educational issues and pedagogy are coming again to be seen as central to effective school leadership. Like the participants in the forums, those who study and write about leadership for the twenty-first century characterize effective school leaders as those who are visionary and skillful learners, strong and competent partners in sustaining reform.

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Chapter 3

Stories of Sustaining Leadership

Explaining the role of stories in professional education, Kathy Carter (1993, p.6) wrote that "...story is a mode of knowing that captures in a special fashion the richness and the nuances of meaning in human affairs... This richness and nuance cannot be expressed in definitions, statements of fact, or abstract proposition. It can only be demonstrated or evoked through story." She cites Martin's (1986, p. 7) text on narrative, which characterizes the story as a kind of "explanation necessary for life."

In her review of the literature about story telling and its potential contribution to professional development, Carter makes two points relevant to the experience of story telling in the leadership forums. First, stories string together collections of facts and events with a purpose and audience in mind. Their power lies more in making and communicating meaning than in portraying an object or occurrence in every detail. Second, to use Martin's words, "Narratives, no matter how peppered with generalizations, always provide more information or food for thought than they have digested" (1986, p. 187). The storytellers in this project have probably not themselves finished learning from their stories--nor, indeed, from their experiences--and the listeners and readers of this collection may find new lessons undreamed of by the authors. Stories, in their nature, capture the complexity of life in ways that defy singular interpretations.

In the invitations to most forums, we asked participants to bring with them a story about their experience that illustrated some aspect of sustaining leadership. During the forum, they had a period of 15 to 30 minutes to write down their example (if they hadn't already), followed by a longer period to share stories and consider their implications. This activity generated spirited discussion and clarified for many the interplay between what they see as the most important dimensions of leadership and the particular situation that frames their daily work. As the stories that follow demonstrate, how they made sense of their circumstances and what they construed as sustaining leadership behavior depended to some degree on a combination of the context, the collective goal, and individual resources. Their tales do not aim to tell others exactly how to act or what constitutes a "right" answer; instead, they show how these outstanding leaders use what Carter (1993) calls "well-remembered events" to extract lessons from challenging experiences governed by particular priorities and values.

Stories of Partnership and Voice

Developing and sustaining programs that enable children to learn to high standards demands leadership that involves teachers, families, and communities in creative partnerships. The voices to be heard range from the still and small to the shrill and nagging, and they emerge from stakeholders of every size and level of political importance. Learning to discriminate among the messages to find those most relevant to reform and finding ways to accommodate legitimate diversity of opinion occupy the attention of leaders who sustain reform, as their stories show.

Reflection #3

1. Select a dimension or two from the list of leadership dimensions that you created for the second reflection activity and write a story describing an experience in which the dimension played a central role. Choose either a situation that benefited from your expertise in that dimension or one that suffered because you had not yet become expert.

2. For the story above, describe a set of behaviors that span the range from novice to expert. (For example, if your story focused on the skill of collaborating effectively, you might say that a novice often forgets to ask for anyone's opinion; a more advanced learner uses only formal channels to solicit input; and a real expert uses formal and informal ways to find out what stakeholders think is important about an issue.)

Parents as partners. Parents have provided very important instruction for many reform leaders. **Joe Ryan**, now principal of Mathews Elementary School in Columbus, Georgia, told about a lesson he learned from a parent to whom he was trying to deliver some bad news.

> This incident occurred in 1982, when we all had a different idea about retaining students. One of our cafeteria workers had a son who was struggling in school. He barely passed fourth grade, and since most of the students in the school were from upper middle class families, I knew he could not keep up in fifth grade. I advised the mother that her son would be better off staying in fourth grade, because he could never pass fifth or sixth grade without repeating fourth. With my college education, I thought I knew what was best for him.
>
> When I got through talking, she said to me, "I appreciate what you said, but I want him to go on to fifth grade. If he fails, I want it to be because of what he has done, not what I have done." The student sailed through fifth and sixth grade, and I don't know where he is today.
>
> Since then I've never predicted failure for any of my students. Wisdom and common sense do not come from education; they come from practical experience and understanding people. We can learn them from anyone.

Angry parents are often powerful educators, challenging leaders to resolve conflicts in ways that leave everyone wiser and more committed to students' success. **Dahyana Otero**, principal of Bryant Elementary School in San Francisco, recalled one incident in which parents and teachers seemed to have lost sight of their shared interest in a child's welfare:

> As the children were getting on the bus one afternoon, a fight broke out between two students. When the teacher tried to stop it, an older cousin of one of the students got involved. The situation escalated, and the teacher sent the three students to speak to me. One child was out of control and refused to come. A couple of teachers restrained him and brought him into the building.

The next day I received a call from the child's mother. She was very angry because the teachers had "grabbed" her child. She wanted to write a letter to put in the teachers' personnel files and thought I should do likewise. She also stated that she did not ever want a teacher to touch her children.

I thanked the parent for informing me of the problem and asked if she could come in so we could meet with the teachers involved. She agreed to come in the next day. I called both teachers and asked them to explain in detail what had occurred. They informed me that the child was out of control and insisted on getting on the bus, so they had to restrain him and bring him into the building. They said that they did not feel it was safe for him or other students to leave him on the bus or outside unsupervised until he calmed down. I agreed with their assessment; children's safety must be our first and foremost responsibility.

The mother came in, still very angry. We welcomed her and offered her a cup of coffee and cookies; her tone changed by the time we sat down. We all listened to her concern. I explained the legal responsibility of staff and school district policy regarding children's safety, and the teachers explained their perspective. By the time we finished the meeting, the parent understood the reasons for needing to restrain the child. We concluded feeling like partners in taking care of **all** children.

Sometime parents' anger is a cover for a deeply held anxiety about children's success, and for some, it stems from the parents' own poor experience with schools. **Earl Martin**, who is now a principal in Olathe, Kansas, told about an event that underscored his commitment to learn by listening.

One of the things I have to work at is listening... There are many situations where I have to make fast-paced decisions, but I still try to take a little time to listen to what someone else is saying rather than trying to force things to happen. Efficiency works better with things than with people. This is a story that taught me about listening.

A few years ago a parent who was very upset with a teacher requested a meeting with the teacher and myself. He was very angry, very hot, and he wanted the teacher's head on a platter. He felt the teacher was continually coming down on his kid and not giving him any opportunities for success, and there were some specific events that made him come to this point. He was one of the most angry parents ever to come into the school.

Anger usually responds to anger, and the teacher met his anger with her own anger. A conflict was brewing between the parent and the teacher. Fortunately, I had a good relationship with the teacher, and we allowed the parent to talk about his anger. It was a dramatic experience, and the parent moved from anger to a very personal level. He shared his own difficult experiences as a child. He was an odd duck kind of person, and so was his child. The child was almost reliving some of the parent's bad experiences. Moving from anger to tears, the father was able to describe those experiences to us. The discussion moved quickly to a different level, and we provided assurance of respect for his son and the differences in learning styles.

He left after almost two hours, by then clearly supportive of the teacher and the school. He came in wanting to demand removal of his son from the teacher and was given a chance to express his concerns and vent his outrage. When we listened, it allowed us to reach a common level, to solve a problem for the child that had never been solved for the father.

Corporations as partners. In addition to parents, other members of the community make good school partners, and understanding how they might be drawn in is the hallmark of many good school leaders. **Donna Kellam**, principal of Alimacani Elementary School in Jacksonville, Florida, found that sometimes asking a small, well-bounded favor generates a broader collaborative effort.

When I opened a new elementary school in 1990, I kept in mind two guiding ideas: Lyndon Johnson's claim that "the vision for America is not that of the President but that of the people" and Carnegie's epitaph, which cited the benefits of surrounding yourself with people better than you are. My goal was to set up a superior school for the 21st century. The vision for the school was collectively formulated by parents, teachers, students, and community. I made it my job to establish partnerships with business and higher education to help realize the vision.

One of the businesses I approached about forming a partnership was the Mayo Clinic. For a variety of reasons, they were not then willing to become "official" partners. They would, however, happily be a site for field trips. After some thought, I called the CEO and invited a staff member to join our newly formed advisory committee to help shape the vision of the school. He sent his human resources person, with the notion, I assumed, of wanting the person responsible for Mayo's hiring to get inside information about the schools in Jacksonville. Mayo's representative served for the year, becoming increasingly involved with our school. At the end of the year, he signed Mayo on as an official partner. Today Mayo is proud and vocal about the partnership and has fully equipped the school's math/science lab, acted as a key player on the school's career days, and recently received the highest business partnership award given in Jacksonville. Students benefit from the lab, the tutors, and the role models. The affiliation with Mayo has tremendously increased the self-esteem of teachers as they have the opportunity to interact with other professionals.

Teachers as partners. We think of teachers as the naturally occurring partnership group in a school, but when reform happens, often faculties find themselves divided into "us" and "them" camps. **David Pava**, principal of Logan High School in Union City, California, had to puzzle his way through the challenge of building a unified team from a fragmented staff:

During our restructuring effort at school, the steering committee ("us") was disappointed that the staff ("them") had not become as involved, motivated, and energized about the "new principles" that were going to define the school as we were. For several hours, the committee discussed and argued about how to get "them" to be willing participants in change.

Through this discussion, I think I was able to help them (and me) to recognize some fundamental issues in leading a school through change. My ability to get the leadership team to trust the competence of the staff was a key. I had to help them

internalize a belief that when teachers feel trusted they will join in changing the school for the better. Also, I recognized that my ability to recognize the special skills, talents, and abilities of each member--the zealots, the visionaries, the analysts, the caretakers--with respect to restructuring will help sustain it. The typical education system doesn't trust the teaching staff. For our reform to succeed, we had to cultivate that trust.

Internal team building is an early and ongoing challenge in any reform effort, especially in secondary schools where departmentalization can make getting together logistically difficult even under ordinary circumstances. Joining previously existing teams demands special leadership skills as well as time to exercise them effectively. **Rainer Houser**, principal of Edmonds-Woodway High School in Edmonds, Washington, catalogued the kinds of expertise he had to acquire to create one great new school out of two traditional institutions:

> The greatest challenge to my leadership was in merging two rival high schools, each very different from the other, with communities not emotionally sold on a merger. I was hired by the Edmonds School District as the planning principal for the merger and given a year to conclude the process.
>
> The leadership qualities and skills needed to achieve this goal were extensive; the assignment tested every one of my leadership traits, learned or inborn. Coming from the outside, I was seen as an unbiased person, but also one who had not yet established the confidence and trust of the parties to be dealt with: the two communities, two student bodies, two opposing traditions, two staffs with differing "cultural" values.
>
> Organizing, listening and categorizing, compromising, empathizing, befriending, sharing expertise, and **never** losing sight of the goal became essential. My biggest initial task was to identify and organize everything that had to be dealt with to accomplish the merger. Then, I had to get good representatives from the appropriate groups to solve problems or recommend how to do tasks.
>
> My most consuming "people" focus was on the two student bodies. I was completely occupied with getting to know them, planning with them and their reps, constantly informing them about--or letting them discover--the positives of merging, and **constantly** being a **positive**, **enthusiastic**, and **tireless** advocate of creating a new school much better than the ones they had before. I really worked to develop student advocates and we sponsored lots of joint activities--and it worked! As students became converts, so did their parents, and as parents became convinced, they expanded the support of the communities at large.
>
> Sharing my vision of what a new school should be, and allowing the two staffs to be partners in this also began to point the staffs in a new direction. Although they were my toughest sell, they did come around!

Participants' stories about their partners and partnerships reveal the deep-seated beliefs about reciprocity that inspire even the most directive leaders. Those who begin with a question--how can we solve this problem?--listen to responses from many sources before they guide the school

community toward a plan. Those who begin with strongly held views of their own find ways to win support for initiatives that, even as they are evolving, take on the features that reflect the stakeholders' contributions. Sustaining reform when it has so many kinds of support does not then depend on any one person's commitment. The partnerships arising from an interested, collaborative approach offer ongoing refreshment for the collective enterprise.

Stories of Vision and Values

Vision and values are intertwined in many stories, just the way they are in most areas of life. On the one hand, embracing an ideal often involves first identifying a set of principles or guidelines and then building a vision of the world perfected by living according to those principles. On the other hand, most participants found that trying to implement the dream introduced them to unforeseen challenges and posed the more familiar dilemmas in different terms--improving rowdy lunchroom behavior in a school whose program is structured around cooperative learning, for example. Implementation may reveal and generate new principles and practices, even when the staff has planned with considerable prior deliberation.

Getting started. **Doug Boushey**'s story of how the faculty at Kent Junior High, in Kent, Washington, restructured its program provides a good example of developing and implementing a shared vision:

Dreaming of Teaming

> Four years ago our staff attended a workshop we called "Dream-A-Team." Its purpose was to introduce the possibility of organizing our school around an interdisciplinary team structure.
>
> The workshop was held in Rooms A4 and A5, which had a movable wall dividing them. One of the obstacles to teaming was a widely shared belief that our facility would not accommodate it. There was a lot of curiosity when the location of the workshop was announced, because most people didn't realize that the wall could be moved. (It had not been opened in many, many years!) A custodian and I folded the wall back and vacuumed out the track. The location alone helped broaden people's understanding of how teaming could occur here.
>
> At the workshop we shared information about the advantages of teaming, described what flexible block scheduling looked like, and summarized what research and evidence of best practices had to offer.
>
> After this presentation, staff were formed into groups of four to develop answers to one of two questions: (1) What are some possible team combinations that could happen at our school, and (2) What should our first steps be?
>
> Before the task could be completed, the teams had to plan how they could divide themselves to gather information from the following sources:
>
> (1) A videotape of a national expert on block scheduling

(2) Presentations from guest speakers on teaming
(3) A review of current literature

Following the planning exercise, the team started on the project. The outcomes were shared publicly and videotaped. This work has set the course for the innovative interdisciplinary team organization that is now schoolwide and is regarded as an organizational approach superior to the one we used to have.

Leaders who involve their faculties in creating a vision and continuously examining its adequacy and relevance are sometimes surprised by the whole-hearted support that results. **Kevin Evoy**, principal of Marshall Middle School in Olympia, Washington, tells of the pleasure he felt when the whole staff rose to defend the dream in the face of an outsider's challenge.

As a staff, we have undertaken some fairly dramatic changes in planning and opening our new middle school, and we have wrestled with evaluating and refining what we do, in preparation for next year [1995-96]. In February of this year we were sort of bogged down in our discussions, when an unexpected and rather remarkable event took place.

We were joined at a staff meeting by a district-level advocate for a particular subject area, who came to voice his opinions about the priority of that program in a discussion of next year's schedule. The meeting went dead silent when he offered, "Why don't you stop all of this nonsense and just go back to a traditional seven-period schedule?" (The "nonsense" included teaching teams with common planning time, integrated instruction in a five-hour flexible block of time, and a unique exploratory program, among other things.)

I was immediately compelled to respond. I began with, "I can't describe the pleasure I would take in sitting down with you, away from this meeting, and going one-on-one over our vision and the components of our program." Dead silence became whatever is even quieter. I went on to say that this staff developed a vision for our school through a year-long planning process prior to the school opening, and that we were not interested in backing away from that vision.

I was prepared to steer the meeting back to the business at hand, but one staff member, then two, addressed the visitor and very eloquently described the elements of our vision and programs and why we were committed to them. Then a third, a fourth, and a fifth staff member spoke, and others. I loved every second of it. Those who did not speak were clearly supportive of what was being said. The visitor left very quickly.

That incident pulled our staff together and brought our vision back into focus. It was an articulation of our vision that was personal and more powerful than any vision-talk I might provide.

I've learned to offer as many opportunities as possible to allow staff, parents, and students to talk about our vision. It enables the passion to spread.

Jay Rowley, now principal of Pine Valley Intermediate School in San Ramon, California, found earlier in his career that forging a vision may begin with honest, straightforward admission of frustrations and challenges. Calling upon the community to identify needs is not failure, but the basis of trust needed to build a shared dream and move toward success. Wrote Mr. Rowley of his tenure at Tyrrell Elementary in Hayward:

> I was assigned to a school that was among the most needy in the district. It had typical inner-city problems: high poverty, high crime, high staff turnover, high student transiency, high number of students with limited English proficiency; low morale. The staff cared greatly about the students, but they didn't treat one another appropriately or professionally. The school's reputation was such that some teacher presenters from other schools in the district refused to provide inservices for this staff because of rude and boorish behavior during staff development activities.
>
> Part way through my first year, the state superintendent came out with the notion of restructuring grants. After attending an overview conference about how to apply, I made this topic an agenda item at the next faculty meeting. This is what I told the staff:
>
> > "There is a movement at the state level to support the efforts of schools like ours, and I want to discuss with you whether this is an opportunity we should seize. Before getting specific, let's talk candidly about how we're doing as a school. I'll begin."
>
> I then shared my frustrations. I said that not only did I feel as though my (very visible and considerable) hard work was providing little success for our kids, but that I personally could not continue without major restructuring efforts where our school program was concerned. We agreed to spend the next three or four weeks discussing the notion of committing ourselves to restructuring. Eventually, the staff agreed to go after our dreams, once they decided on what those dreams would be.
>
> As a result, the school with the "bad little boy" reputation transformed itself. In the first year we won a restructuring planning grant, and in the second year we earned a five-year implementation grant. Where school restructuring efforts are concerned, Tyrrell is now one of the leaders in the East Bay. And we launched it all in two years!

Assembling plans for a systemic change takes time. **Elizabeth Onik** and the staff of Bishop Hogan High School in Kansas City, Missouri, worked around the clock for two days and several hours on a third to thrash out their differences, find a mission they agreed on, and draft the blueprint for change. Ms. Onik remembers it this way:

> I woke up at three in the morning on December 2, struck by the breadth, depth and width of implementing an entire systemic change in our school. I thought through the multiple issues that were involved in creating an authentic, brain-compatible, integrated, thematic instruction model for high school and determined that I needed to take my faculty away to grapple with the challenge of leaping from pilot programs to systemic change.

Seventeen faculty members gathered to begin planning at 6 p.m. on Sunday, January 17. Using data recently collected by a Rockhurst College Executive MBA class for a case study of Bishop Hogan High, we began to talk. We discussed and disagreed until we finally achieved consensus on our mission within the mission of the school. This process lasted four and one-half hours. Convening again at 9 a.m. on Monday, the staff divided up the work of program design and implementation. With breaks for meals, we worked for more than 14 hours and typed the final sentence for the new model into the computer at 11:30 p.m. that night. The following day, Tuesday, based upon the plan, the teachers worked on the budget for the model, identifying the multiple resources and priorities necessary for implementation.

We ended the working retreat by reviewing the process. Early on Sunday, folks had expressed how put-out they were about having to take the time to do this, even though they knew it was necessary. By Tuesday noon, they shared two primary perceptions of the process:

(1) Where I was resistant, now I am enrolled. I feel good about what we created together.

(2) I know the people I work with, not just the teachers who come to work with me.

We were all exhausted.

When classes resumed on Wednesday, every faculty member--including me--had changed something about how we worked with students and each other. Although the process is time consuming and challenging because of the different personalities and degrees of experiences involved, it is necessary. We didn't have to sell our work to one another; we joined one another in our work. My job seems more complicated now because faculty come to me with the legitimate loose ends that naturally occur in times of change and sometimes expect an immediate response. But the process affirmed what I believe: good schools are a community event.

Realizing the dream. Creating a vision collaboratively involves making successive approximations of the "good school," alternating attention between the big picture and the individual programs and themes that contribute to it. In her work at Trent Elementary, in Spokane, Washington, **Shelley Harding** found that one initiative suggested by the faculty had unintended side effects that clashed with a high-priority value. Her challenge was to figure out how to encourage and act on teachers' ideas without sacrificing important principles:

In my mind, a commitment to equity is **the** critical factor in my work as a principal. For purposes of illustration, I'll use the process that evolved for restructuring in our school, Trent Elementary. It has implications for all the stakeholders--students, staff, and parents/patrons.

Early in my principalship, a group of primary teachers came to me with a concern about the "lack of readiness" for first grade they perceived in some of their students and the implications of the District's nonretention policy. Their solution was to

establish a "step-up" type program, a grade between kindergarten and first, and they wanted to know if I'd support it.

Because of my belief in equal access to quality instruction for all students and the power of diversity, I was very reluctant to endorse what might amount to a watered-down program and homogeneous grouping. Instead I suggested that we explore the research to find other ways of addressing their concern.

Eventually, with the help of Educational Research Service, the Association of Washington School Principals, neighboring districts, and many other sources, our team came up with the concept of developmentally appropriate practices, where high expectations for all, continuous progress, and criterion- rather than norm-referenced tests enhance the curriculum and instructional strategies. In short, young children are viewed as WHOLE, not candidates for remediation at the ripe old age of six!

This discovery opened the door for team discussions on whole language, cooperative learning, manipulative math, and all the other super primary techniques which might possibly render even "gradedness" obsolete in our school.

Multi-age classrooms have evolved at Trent, and with Reader's and Writer's Workshops, thematic integrated instruction, and team planning has come a more equitable structure for all!

The process also illustrates two more attributes for a successful principal which I value: the ability to take small events and turn them to accomplish larger goals, and the idea of principal as co-learner.

Common dilemmas. The community actions stimulated by these leaders reflect the moral imperatives that impel educators collectively to find consensus about how to provide good programs for students. However, leaders often find themselves in moral dilemmas arising from the conflicts between the requirements of the collective vision and the demands of their individual vision of personal integrity. **Joanruth Hirshman**, formerly a principal in Philadelphia and now working in Morrisville, Pennsylvania, belongs to a group of principals who have been meeting with a professional researcher twice a month for several years to puzzle out these dilemmas together. Journal writing is shared as a mechanism to reflect and focus on administrative practices, to revisit and explore behaviors in meaningful ways. Dr. Hirshman shared this journal entry about the complexities of urban school administration:

That Jermaine

Wednesday Morning, 9:20 a.m.

I walked into the office to hear the following from my secretary: "Jermaine is sick. He's running a high fever. The nurse was called to the other school on an emergency. I tried to get Jermaine's mother to come for him, but she says that she lives too far away. How could he live 'far away' and come to our school? No wonder that he is often late and that Mother did not come for a report card

conference. I didn't want to send him back to the room. He is too sick. What should I do?"

I looked at a listless, lethargic, hot, sweaty, feverish seven-year-old Jermaine lying on the office bench. I uttered an inane, "I'm sorry that you are not feeling well, Jermaine. Don't you know that you are not supposed to get sick in school?"

The secretary pressed me with the telephone number. I always wind up feeling like Mr. Answer Man, in that radio show from my youth in the days before television. I took the telephone number and dialed.

"Jermaine is too ill to remain in school," I stated after identifying myself to his mother. Is there anyone who could come for him? .... If you cannot take him home, I will have our School Community Coordinator drive him. I am concerned about the extent of his fever.... Fine, with your permission, we will have him home shortly. I want to make certain that I have your correct address.... Have you always lived there?... You have? Well, that means Jermaine is not attending his neighborhood school. If he were, you would be able to get him easily. I will have the coordinator bring him to you. I am sending you Jermaine's transfer papers for the school closest to you."

My thoughts were so self-righteous! So much for elementary school choice activists. I am certain that illness, emergencies, and punctuality are not a part of the choice vision. What a dreadful position for a child!

Wednesday afternoon, 2 p.m.

The school leadership team had gathered around the table to discuss assessment issues when Mr. Jackson, Jermaine's second-grade teacher, absolutely gyrated into the room.

"Yes, there is a God!" he exclaimed.

I asked what he meant and he replied, "Jermaine's transfer."

Mr. Jackson replied that he had tried "everything" with Jermaine. Jermaine was being seen by the psychologist, the school counselor, the math support teacher, and the reading support teacher. Senior citizen volunteers had adopted him. Even the behavior shaping team was working with him. Jermaine's behavior was so erratic and volatile that his removal would establish some normalcy in the classroom.

Each of the adults in the room spoke up. Each expressed a feeling of relief over no longer having to cope with this highly disruptive child. One teacher stated that if he were the only youngster with such enormous needs, that would be one thing. However, there were so many that she was saddened to admit that she, too, felt lightened by this one removal.

I exploded with, "THAT JERMAINE! I cannot believe I did that! I cannot believe that I actually transferred that Jermaine!"

I was devastated. I have a school full of Jermaines. I have I don't know how many Jermaines in second grade. No wonder that I did not equate that tired, listless, fever-flushed Jermaine with the whirling dervish full of rage who usually lived within that young, tormented, and emotionally abused body. I had been busy and preoccupied with a dozen matters that now seemed so trivial that I had not paid sufficient attention to a young child.

I wanted to escape and cry, "PLEASE GOD, FORGIVE ME!" I would never have transferred this hellion who has never had a constant in his life from a mother who sees him as a burden.... It all came to me: Jermaine, the oldest of all of his brothers and sisters, each from a different father. Jermaine, on whom mother blamed all of her problems and lack of success. Jermaine's mother, a beautiful young woman, immaculately groomed, tastefully made up, articulate, in therapy, and now living with a man who had not fathered any of the children. The sickness within me rose in my esophagus. Could I take the morning back? Please, have the mother call to protest the transfer.

I heard the comments from the group: "Now, I know why she transferred him. She didn't realize who he was. It's a good thing that she wasn't paying closer attention." "I was surprised, but I didn't want to say anything." Such were the comments from staff I know to be caring advocates for children.

It is now more than a week later. I have not gotten over my guilt. Do I truly believe that we or I could have made a supreme difference in Jermaine's life? I think about him as I start every day with inner pain.

I wonder whether there is a separation between my administrative life and my role as a mother. Is an elementary school principal a mother to the world? I contemplate the values that I hold dear. The values that I share are often not shared at all or to different degrees with the other adults of my world. Therein is created much of the loneliness. The word, however, is not loneliness, for I am always surrounded by people. Rather, Molly's word, loneness, is apt, except within the group. I would hesitate to express my feelings to most of my fellow administrators. I believe that they would tell me that principals cannot save the world. Yet, I do believe that to save one child is as if to save the world. The episode with Jermaine has been a significant emotional event for me.

Most participants insisted that although it occasionally leads to painful experiences such as Dr. Hirshman's, modeling behavior implicit in the values that drive the vision is a crucial element of leadership. Sometimes the best one can do is model an honest struggle--coping with Jermaine is complicated, and balancing the competing goals is not easy. Other times, leaders succeed by reminding themselves what they aim to stand for and taking matters into their own hands rather than delegating. That is what **Robert Garlett**, now principal of Fox Elementary School in Camas, Washington, found himself doing with Tony.

Several years ago I received a frantic phone call from the secretary at a neighboring school. The principal was gone, and a situation in a classroom needed immediate intervention. I drove over to the school.

The secretary directed me to a sixth-grade classroom where a student had a teacher intimidated and stressed to the point of being irrational. The room was in chaos; other staff were peeking in the windows, and other students appeared either to cheer the student on or to be afraid. I had no problem removing the student, Tony, to the office area, where I got him calmed down, and called his mom.

While waiting for his mom, I had a chance to listen to Tony and to speak with several teachers and paraprofessionals. No one, including Tony, had anything positive to say about Tony, and it was clear he had no chance in that school. After telling the secretary to redirect his mom to my school, I put Tony in my car and took him there.

When his mom arrived, I had the necessary enrollment forms and in-district transfer papers ready for her to sign. I told her my plan: Tony was going to attend my school and change his ways because we were going to believe in him. She looked at me somewhat shocked and signed the papers.

We made sure Tony had a positive school year. Later, I kept in touch with him, attended some sporting events and concerts he took part in. A year ago I received an invitation to his high school graduation; he has now completed a year of college. He has his own rock band and is active in drug and alcohol prevention programs for local teens.

This experience helped me gel as an administrator and let me know I could stand for my belief in kids and what good teachers could do for them. It was a risk to make such a move unilaterally, but I knew that Tony had to have a different environment to be successful in school.

For perceptive leaders, the problems of individual children such as Jermaine and Tony serve as indications of glitches in the system. They stimulate reflection and sometimes lead to change. For **Lea Anna Portmann**, principal of Enumclaw Junior High in Enumclaw, Washington, the case of Robert caused a reassessment of her own goals and a critical look at routine practices that served most students well enough, but left at least one out in the cold. Robert taught her that sometimes she needed to flex the program to support student success.

A teachable moment that dramatically affected my belief system as a principal was presented by a boy named Robert. Robert was a Native American eighth-grade student who was a chronic non-attender and seemed to receive little support from home for school success. In November we got his mother to agree to come in for a conference. As the counselor and I prepared to conference with Robert and his mother, I had several thoughts about why Robert wouldn't come to school. He was a large boy and tenth out of 11 children. Not one of his brothers or sisters had graduated from high school.

Since his mother had no car, I went to get her. I began the conference with a simple question: "Robert, we care about you and want you to be successful in school--why won't you come?" It took a few minutes for him to answer. As large tears slid down his cheeks, he looked down at the floor and quietly replied, "'Cause I'm no good at it!" He had no great excuses, just a simple declaration of pain. His mother, who

wanted very much for Robert to attend, explained that Robert couldn't bring his books home to study, because his father and brothers made fun of him or, worse, took his books and hid them.

We cut a deal with Robert. What if we created a different program for him, one that would focus on what he needed most to be successful? We had staff who volunteered to provide the support system to him that his mother and family could not or would not. We enrolled him in two English classes instead of one. We gave him one and a half periods of math and set him to work tutoring others during the second half of the extra period. We made sure that each and every day people greeted him by name and let him know how glad we were to see him. We told him that if he would come every day he would "get good at school" and that we believed in him. We challenged him to take a chance on us.

His mother agreed to walk to a pay phone and give us a call should Robert not be coming to school, and Robert agreed to make more of an effort. No books went home. Instead, quizzing and study time was built into his school schedule. Robert went from failing to Honor Roll by June. His mom only had to walk to that pay phone twice in the next six and a half months.

Robert caused me to view our school in very different terms. I realized that there were a lot of kids who attended and failed, who were "no good at school." I wondered if I would have the courage to go day after day to a job that I was "no good at." I formulated the belief that our schools needed to become a lot more flexible, not only for kids but for the adults. Robert taught me that not every youngster or staff member needed to take the same path through our system. To continue with this lockstep mentality would lead to more failures. Robert taught me to be flexible at the most basic level and to view our school in a more personal yet global manner. He taught me that if we took the time to listen to one another and were willing to trust one another, success--not failure--was possible. Robert turned around from flunking school to obtaining a 3.2 GPA. It was a success story for the entire faculty and helped me realize that we need to look at things in a human way. We can't use cookie [cutter] solutions--we need to find solutions that help everyone.

On good days, commitment to a vision and the related values helps leaders solve problems and even bring all the resources of an institution to bear on the success of a Robert or Tony. On bad days, the best that can be hoped is surviving until the tide of woes subsides. In his first assignment as principal, one urban administrator in Washington State discovered that sometimes having a dream simply helps faculties and their leaders slog forward when their situation seems temporarily hopeless.

November 26, 1985: one month, 26 days after accepting my first principalship, three students were killed on campus. At that time it was the first multiple homicide/suicide on any school campus. The story went worldwide instantly.

Throw out the Ed 101 lectures, the books on public education, the need to form a committee--just do it! Do what? In the next 72 hours I had to take charge of the national and international media, the community, and everything and everyone that

these three students touched, and attend three funerals in three different neighborhoods of the region.

My "end" then was to keep the lives of the living going, create an atmosphere of dignity and compassion for those who died, and navigate through the demands of sustaining self, family, and work world.

Since then, several more students have been shot, some dying as a result; most recently two students were shot to death off campus for pranking with eggs right at the beginning of the school year.

From these deaths have come my lessons for life:

(1) Keep those that survive as the main focus for the long term.

(2) Treat everyone with dignity and respect--give each the opportunity to participate and achieve at a high level each day.

(3) Take calculated risks every day to help people enjoy the journey they are on and see the positive opportunities.

(4) Structure and keep a vision of life constantly in front of us, because we just don't know what the next minute brings.

(5) Fight the "poor-woe-is-me" syndrome to the max. (It is mighty nice to be alive and be able to keep trying).

(6) Know that Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs must be met, but they are only the foundation for the truly inspirational endeavors, the dreams that we human beings are capable of achieving.

(7) Keep the destination in mind, but enjoy the journey every day!

The stories of vision told by these sustaining leaders show some of the ways dreams can come true. Vision, they know, is a changeling: the particulars that constitute an educational "Eden" shift as a school community nears its goal and learns more about what makes programs good and effective. Leadership in a reforming school seems to demand both clarity about what is to be achieved and tolerance of the ambiguities that are part of this kind of work. From lofty academic aeries, classicists may portray Utopias achieved by uninterrupted work on glorious visions, but amid the clutter and confusion of real schools, sustaining leaders depend on quick flashes of insight and glimpses of progress as they inch toward their goals.

Stories of Knowledge and Daring

Risk taking is a dimension of leadership that was on the tip of everyone's tongue at the leadership forums, suggesting an affective school environment where Amelia Earhart and Indiana Jones might feel right at home. The participants' stories, however, painted a somewhat different

picture. Make no mistake--implementing truly bold new models of education demands great moral courage sometimes. Even changing a minor but locally admired practice that is in the way of student success may create a situation where a leader's survival depends on pure grit. A daring spirit is what pushes sustaining leaders past the boundaries of past practice. But the preferred risk-taking strategies of most participants involved studying hard, planning well, and implementing carefully. They prepared to explore the next educational frontier with the thoroughness and exactitude of a science officer as well as the boldness of a starship commander. In the midst of reform, leaders embrace a form of continuous improvement that requires analyzing and adapting. Throughout all, leaders are learners, whose curiosity makes their quest for knowledge a lifelong activity.

Building a knowledge base for planning. Developing a promising new plan to implement a good idea usually means learning everything you can about why the old system is ineffective and what might be done to establish a system that works better. Some participants found that slipping into the role of "lead learner" was easiest when they were genuine novices. This was the case for **Connie Rickman** in the early days of her assignment as vice principal of Lincoln High School in Tacoma, Washington. She wrote:

> After a few years as my district's student suspensions hearing officer, I worked as vice principal and principal of a junior high school, then transferred to a high school. There, within a couple of months, I was given the opportunity to develop the Master Building Program.
>
> Being new to the building, I was able to see the cracks in the program offerings already in place. My proposition to the principal was this: "If I accept this challenge, I want reasonable freedom to work with the staff to develop a challenging program for our students." Response was in the affirmative.
>
> Since I had the excuse of being a novice, I was allowed to plead ignorance of our clientele, their needs, and how we were meeting their needs. Thus, I was given the latitude to study these issues. My plan was to review what is, what could be, and what the long- and short-term possibilities were.
>
> First, I asked Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NREL) in Portland, Oregon, to oversee and guide our project. A group that included the administrators, a couple of department chairs, and "coaches" from the NREL selected a steering committee, co-chaired by a highly respected teacher and me.
>
> To get an idea of what a high school program could contribute, we worked with our Partners in Business (PALs) and Washington Natural Gas (WNG) to develop a survey for two adult groups: WNG employees and U.S. Army soldiers, their dependents, and civilians working for the U.S. Army throughout the world. The focus was simple: "Knowing what you now know, and if you got the chance to do it over, what courses would you take?"; and "Of those you did study, which ones helped you the most in a) your personal life and b) your occupation or profession?" The answers were so good we made copies of the results and walked our students through them every semester as they prepared their course schedules.

It was a rewarding--and, yes, challenging--experience. That first year we had two all-day Saturday sessions for overall school reports on progress, the status of implementation, and other work. Otherwise, our Blue Ribbon Curriculum Committee (BRCC) met twice a month. Each department developed its **own** mission statement, goals, and objectives. Each department chose its own format, using district and other outside resources, as their plans evolved. At the same time, every department reported its plans to the BRCC, so everybody knew what was going on, including parents and students, who were represented on the committee. Looking back, I see that my studies of what the school programs could be led us all to learn exciting new things.

Coming in as a beginner with a lot to learn made it possible for that administrator to stake out room to maneuver and to bring into that "room" others whose learning could inform planning. Sometimes forum participants brought expertise with them to new situations but wisely waited for the teachable moment to share it with their faculties. **Lyndal Webb** was principal of Hahira Elementary in Hahira, Georgia, where reform strategies were well underway--parent involvement, staff development, and site-based management. She told how her declaration of disappointment with the early results led the staff to embrace new approaches with great enthusiasm:

After voicing my concern that the school was failing its children, I was summoned by the staff to a meeting. They told me that they wished to create a non-graded program and expressed views about reform they had never before expressed. I listened to them carefully and, although I had some reservations, I shared with them the information I had gleaned from traveling to England and reading research and current thinking on the issue. Then the staff devised a plan. My role was primarily supportive. I helped them, but they collectively developed the vision. They involved parents, and I arranged release time to work on it. I eased some of their teaching loads by taking over their classes. Their plan was presented to the superintendent, who approved it. The final product was to become the foundation for Georgia's first school for the future.

After their success, I told staff, "If this had been my idea, you would have kicked me out the door." Because they all had a stake in the work and had collaborated closely, the teachers discovered their strength as a group. When the first challenge to reform at the school recently was brought by [a religiously conservative group], they were able to surmount it together. I have found personally rewarding the phenomenal progress made by our students as a result of this staff initiative.

Participants' stories indicated that, given the intensive and continuous demands of daily teaching, motivating staff to invest energy in making a major change required two kinds of activities. First, leaders helped faculty see how present arrangements limit their effectiveness in promoting student success. Second, leaders gave staff the opportunity to contribute to the design of new arrangements, to ensure that they accommodated real-world conditions as well as moved closer to their educational ideal.

Analyzing and adjusting. Reforming education is often compared to rebuilding a plane while it's in flight; life in schools seldom stops for long enough to permit us to start from scratch. Borrowing a page from the texts on Total Quality Management, many reforming schools are engaged

in continuous improvement: gathering data about some aspect of their operations, analyzing them, and making appropriate programmatic changes. **Carol Boyd** describes how the staff at Corvallis Elementary School in San Leandro, California, made "in-flight" adjustments to its program for students in the upper elementary grades:

> This story is about the nature of change, how it can emerge in a moment, a moment we need to seize. Because our school houses K-7 students and our high schools serve grades 8-12, meeting the needs of our middle school students is problematic. The sixth- and seventh-grade teachers at our school work as a core team and have developed a program modeled after elements in *Caught in the Middle*. One of the key dilemmas of this kind of configuration is sharing resources and scheduling at the school site.
>
> Last year we had an uneven number of core classes. Up to this point, the core program had consisted of an English-language arts/social studies block from 8:25 to 9:55, followed by an hour of either science or math and then vice versa. This enabled teachers to specialize in an area. With an uneven number of classes, however, scheduling became problematic. I had already been thinking about how this scheduling challenge offered a golden opportunity to innovate. Among the areas I felt we needed to develop were technology and applications of curriculum content to the real world.
>
> One of the lead core teachers invited the group over for dinner in August to develop a plan and a schedule and welcome a new colleague. This party was a tradition, and members of the teachers' families were included as well. As we met and chatted before dinner, two teachers shared their thoughts on scheduling. One suggested dividing the students into four groups, leaving the fifth teacher to float and help in the science classes on lab days, for example. The other wanted to see the extra teacher teach art. I mentioned that it would be a great opportunity to create something really new and exciting and talked a little about curriculum integration, especially in the area of science and technology. One of the teachers, the core leader who was anticipating being the floater, began to brighten as I talked. Excitedly, she talked about having a "block of time" (and I did not expand greatly at this point), thinking about the use of computers (she had just bought one and was learning word processing) and began to describe ideas for a math/science course. After further discussion, the group agreed to try her idea.
>
> Here was an individual who had been teaching for 20+ years, who barely knew how to use a computer, agreeing in August to teach a curriculum still totally undeveloped to a group of 24 students (six pulled from each of the four classes) for a four-week period. This was risk taking! I pulled in every debt owed by people across the district and in the county office to support her as she began. She stayed, literally, one day ahead of the students. I ordered materials advertised to support math/science integration. The class was so successful that this year it has expanded into two classes, one for the sixth grade and one for the seventh.
>
> The curriculum last year focused on school-level environmental and resource-use issues. Students working in cooperative teams surveyed other students and staff,

called local agencies, videotaped toilets flushing, and developed presentations, using laser disc, video, and computers to present their findings and recommendations on how to conserve resources such as water, electricity, and paper. This year the students took the math/science/tech course twice. During the first session, the student groups identified a problem that they wished to research. Some of the problems included pollution, graffiti, and endangered animals. During the second session, the two classes met together with the two teachers to learn about earthquakes, how they are measured, how they occur (a topic of great interest in the Bay Area). Student groups then determined how the city would cope with the aftermath of an earthquake in areas such as transportation, sanitation, food and water supplies, and health. As a culminating activity, the San Leandro Earthquake Preparedness Department made a slide show presentation to the students on the city's actual emergency plan.

Occasionally, after rushing in where angels seldom tread, a faculty discovers why even angels might have cause to worry. **Alan Burke**, principal of Mill Pond Intermediate School in Yelm, Washington, describes how his staff evaluated the success of a new program and decided to make an adjustment when they found that some students were not faring well under the new regime:

When planning a new intermediate school, one of my major "vision-related" tasks was to sell the fifth-grade teachers on the merits of team teaching. They were coming to the new team-based intermediate (fifth and sixth grade) program from self-contained class experiences. To do that, I had them visit current sixth-grade classrooms that were successfully teamed, travel to schools that had implemented teaming, and set up one two-person fifth-grade team as a model for study. The initial process went well; teachers from fifth grade agreed unanimously to team, and plans were made to open a fully teamed school in the fall of 1993.

About halfway through the first quarter of the school year, as the euphoria of opening a brand new school wore off, fifth-grade teachers began to complain about the lack of "bonding" among students and teachers, compared to previous years, when they worked in a self-contained environment. I listened to each team carefully, asked them for suggestions, and then realized my mistake. Basically, I had assumed that fifth-graders (with whom I had never before associated during my professional career) were the same as sixth-graders; therefore, they would fit easily into a three-person team model that rotated homeroom groups for math, social studies, and science. Unfortunately, they were not the same. Simply put, the younger students needed more contact with their homeroom teachers and fewer disruptions in the block of time scheduled for exploratory classes and rotations.

To solve this, I reduced one exploratory offering for fifth-grade kids (giving teams more block time) and planned to experiment with two-person teams for the 1994-95 school year. The staff appreciated the additional block time, and watched as our experimental two-person team flourished during this current school year. In 1995-96, all but one of the fifth-grade teams will convert to two-person arrangements.

What I learned through all of this was to pay more attention to kids and current programs when planning a new school--especially when I lack experience at a grade level or with an alternative type of school schedule--and continually ask staff engaged

in a change initiative about the results of the new programs that have been planned. Accommodating their legitimate concerns is one important way to build trust.

Many educators view shared decision making at the school level to be a key ingredient of site-based management. Involving stakeholders in planning programs and allocating resources can ensure that issues are comprehensively examined and thoughtfully resolved. **Ann McDuffie**, principal of Edgewood Elementary in Columbus, Georgia, found that her preparations for discussions about staffing arrangements made a substantial contribution to deliberations:

> When given the opportunity by the superintendent to make school-based decisions about staff reorganization, I faced a difficult choice. The mandate was to allow the faculty to decide what would best support instruction, in terms of personnel. The reality was that any change would likely result in someone being moved to another school.
>
> I knew what I believed to be our best move, but not how to get feedback from the faculty in a manner that no one would find threatening, whatever their opinion. I spent half the night drawing up a matrix that outlined every reorganization scheme I could think of. The matrix showed every possibility with each successive step. Grade-level teams met, and I discussed the matrix with them.
>
> Next the leadership team met, and we shared opinions. There were strong convictions about who would lose and who would gain under each scheme--some tears--some soul searching. In the end, we could all agree that if we were really going to act out our mission and become risk takers in the learning environment, we had to give up territory and think of all the students in our school rather than just those in a single class.
>
> This problem-solving effort brought me quickly to the conclusion that empowering teachers and getting their buy-in was essential. It wouldn't be the last time we faced a difficult situation as a team. This experience led me to be a believer in team decision making and in doing my homework before I put any cards on the table.

Doing "homework" arose as a theme in many stories. The leader's homework often served a role like that of lesson planning--as the prerequisite for a productive staff learning experience. Often, however, the homework was a group activity, in which all members of the staff took part. **Bill Duncan**, principal of Knollwood Elementary in Decator, Georgia, tells about an "assignment" his faculty gave itself when one of the school programs faltered:

> After four years of frustration with their assertive discipline system, teachers felt a need for change. They began with a two-day workshop, where staff members, parents, and community leaders came together to discuss a variety of issues. From this workshop came ideas on new discipline systems and a request to look at other schools trying innovative approaches to discipline. After staff members visited several schools and collected new ideas, twenty-four came together in the summer of 1994 for a two-day meeting in which they shared concerns and ideas. From this meeting came a new discipline system for the 1994-1995 school year. Before school started, a team of faculty members taught their colleagues how to implement the new

system effectively. On the basis of this year's experience, the staff is planning a workshop for the summer of 1995 to refine the present system.

Sometimes faculties embrace new programs with great initial enthusiasm and then get cold feet when the time comes to implement it fully. Unconscious reservations and hidden fears block progress until someone volunteers to surface them so they can be dealt with rather than permit them to shut down reform. **Lois Jones**, principal of Oceana High School in Pacifica, California, told how her own confession opened the gates of disclosure among staff members and set them going again on the path toward professionalism:

> The staff had agreed to implement a peer coaching program, as part of our self-assessment process. We agreed that coaching teams would cross learning areas and that teams would have experienced and new teachers working together to improve classroom practice, thus improving student learning. The work began: teams shared student work and conferenced on practices. However, we bogged down on classroom observations. We did put a process in place-- preobservation conference, classroom visitation, and postobservation conference--and grant money was designated for support, but observations did not occur.
>
> As I thought about what was happening and--more importantly--not happening, I decided to find a nonthreatening way to confront the issue. At Oceana, all certificated staff teach in the classroom; all are a part of the process, so I was directly involved.
>
> At a staff meeting on peer coaching, I approached the topic by relating to the staff how I had "forgotten" to meet for a preobservation conference. My question was, "Could I have missed this meeting because the entire issue of coaching one another made me anxious and fearful?" I asked whether anyone else had similar concerns.
>
> A wonderful conversation followed; for the first time we openly addressed the fears inherent in such a process. As a result of this exchange, we built in safety nets to ease the fears of such risk taking. Now classroom visitations have tremendously increased and the process is becoming institutionalized.

When circumstances seem to warrant taking action that is not warmly supported by their superiors, leaders line their ducks up in a row before moving forward. Participants often spoke of the reasons for living to fight another day, but they also made it clear that for some principles it was worth pushing the limits of permission. For example, when **Bradford Fellows**, principal of Albert H. Hill Middle School in Richmond, Virginia, had what looked to him like a great idea for increasing parent involvement, he had to make a strong case for adopting it in order for the district office to drop its opposition:

> I am a principal in an urban middle school (grades 6-8) where parent involvement is, at best, difficult to create and maintain.
>
> We send report cards home at nine-week intervals. Several days after report cards are sent home, a parent/teacher conference is scheduled. The turnout for these conferences has traditionally been very poor.

> I decided to try increasing parental involvement, support, and responsibility by requiring parents to come to the parent/teacher conferences to pick up student report cards. The superintendent's office was not enthusiastic about this idea, so I minimized the risk of failure in several ways. First, I met with the school's Faculty Planning Council and quickly learned that I had 100 percent support from the school staff. Secondly, I held several meetings in the community, outlining my plan. It seemed as if I had general support from a large segment of the community.
>
> Our first parent/teacher conference of this year turned out to be a booming success. More than 80 percent of the report cards were picked up by parents at this conference. This concept was not only accepted by central administration, but it is now being promoted throughout the district.

In general, forum participants described school-centered learning activities, arising from or directed toward common work on educational programs. However, formal education played a significant part in the professional development of many. **Jim Dougherty**, the executive director of the De La Salle Education Center in Kansas City, Missouri, describes how his personal odyssey influenced his support of faculty growth:

> Five years ago, I asked a friend how I could improve myself as an educator, and he suggested that I get a doctorate. I enrolled, and about halfway through the process I found myself captivated by educational theory and new practices. It made me really excited again; I got into theory and started applying everything. I encouraged my staff in a general way to become lifelong learners; two have since enrolled in PhD programs, two have completed masters degrees, several are doing graduate work, and others are considering graduate programs. One colleague commented humorously, "If you can do it (get a doctorate), anyone can."
>
> We've since engaged in organizational development that included Total Quality Management training, a complete school restructuring process, and courses in faculty and student governance offered by the University of Missouri at Kansas City. All of these explore education from a theoretical viewpoint. We're also working on a "Just Community" model, based on Lawrence Kohlberg's theory. Our school's mission statement now identifies us as "a learning organization," and whenever possible we help staff pay for the education programs they choose.

For leaders who sustain reform, their daring behavior is informed by learning from colleagues, parents, and students as well as from more formal sources. Knowledge of human nature, instructional practices, and organizational development is the wellspring of the courage of their convictions.

Stories of Savvy and Persistence

The final set of stories told by participants focuses on the importance of knowing nitty-gritty aspects of management--how to put programs in place, how to supervise wisely and well, how to satisfy the legitimate demands of parents, teachers, the central office, and the community. Mastery of

the substantive and procedural dimensions of management strengthens leaders' capacity to promote productive work, avoid unnecessary conflict, and withstand fleeting or ill-founded opposition.

Managing the school. Taking care of school business requires the ability to deal with the good news and the bad news regarding staff performance. Achieving academic excellence for students depends on achieving instructional excellence with teachers. For some teachers sometimes, excellence seems more distant a target than it should. As principal of Chinn Elementary School in Kansas City, Missouri, **Jim Singer** came to understand the role of empathy in correcting poor performance:

> I discovered that whether I'm working with adults or kids, it's more important to have empathy than agreement--but that doesn't mean accepting poor performance. I've been evaluating teachers for 20 years. This year we had a teacher who dropped from peak performance to far below acceptable standards. As I shared ratings with her, I worked hard to demonstrate empathy, while at the same time referring to district expectations. She offered several excuses, but we focused on what could be done for improvement, to reclaim professional integrity. We stayed away from the negative aspects and she was able to accept the message, without being hostile to the messenger. She really bought in to the need for improvement, and expressed a sense of relief about going through the process. Eventually, she improved. Focusing on expectations allowed us to keep from dwelling on the negative activities.

One-on-one relationships are only part of the big picture in school leadership. Setting up manageable and productive structures to support the work of the whole staff is another key component of sustaining leadership. **Darla Berry**, now the principal of Merriam Elementary in Merriam, Kansas, explained how she facilitated shared decision making when she started at Edison Elementary in Kansas City, Kansas:

> I joined the T.A. Edison staff after the mission and school improvement plan had already been set in place. However, various staff conversations indicated that teachers didn't feel ownership in the process; in fact, they were scared to death. In order for our school to achieve successful outcomes, I felt the ownership issue must be addressed.
>
> So we started breaking the planning up into small steps and that's where shared decision making came in. I used our school site council as a sounding board for the staff committees to talk about their school improvement plans, as well as to involve the school site council in the staff development activities that would lead to successful completion of each outcome. Since the school site council consisted of parents, teachers, certified staff, and community persons, a **cooperative and collaborative environment** began to take shape. The school council kept meeting about what this new plan should look like, and I could feel them finally buying into the change. The committees truly began to shape their vision of each outcome. They met regularly, received feedback regularly from other staff members, and felt **responsibility for the process**. *[Emphasis in original.]*
>
> Early this year, the state department of education set March 1 as the date of its site visit. Its review procedure is quite an ordeal--a four-year process for developing a

school profile, improvement plan, and staff development plan. We got plopped into the middle of this as a pilot program. The time came to plan our presentation--one day to show four years' work! The staff (and site council) met to determine the best way to show progress and attainment. I challenged them to make the presentation interesting, rather than statistical. I provided substitutes throughout the building (on a rotating schedule) in order that the whole committee could be present at their presentation. Because we were a pilot school, the staff decided to use 250 students to prove they were doing what they said they were doing. The state department thanked them for not showing them strictly statistics.

I've asked myself, "What would this have been like with a principal who didn't believe in shared decision making?" Some principals I've worked under made me think, "This isn't the way it should be." New teachers were struggling, and they weren't getting any help. So I decided that when I became an administrator, the kind of things I do will not be anything like what they did.

In several forums, participants discussed staff perceptions of their leadership. Many commented with resignation that they often felt misunderstood, even when, by reasonable objective measures, things were going well. One new administrator had the happy experience of seeing evidence that the faculty not only knew what she was trying to do, but thought it valuable enough to offer material support for her doing it. Speaking of her experience as assistant principal at Hixson High in Chattanooga, Tennessee, **Cheri Dedmon** related this tale:

As a new assistant principal this year, I was really worried about my credibility with the staff. I have been a teacher at Hixson for fourteen years and had been seen as a real "radical." In the past, I had chosen to be an irritant, hoping to get teachers out of their comfort levels as we tried to restructure our school along the lines of the nine common principles of the Coalition of Essential Schools. I really worked hard this fall to convey to faculty members the extent to which I valued their work and hoped to be seen by them as a "classroom-centered" collaborator. I wasn't sure how I would know whether I was making progress in this area, until one day before Thanksgiving...

Friday afternoon, sixth period, we were short on subs, and I volunteered to cover a class. The Spanish teacher walked into my office to vent about a problem student. I listened, offered some support and advice, then walked over to the secretary's desk to tell her I would be in Mr. Jones' class the rest of the period. The Spanish teacher overheard our conversation and replied, "No, Miss Cheri, you have very important work to do, let me cover Mr. Jones' class for thirty minutes or so, and then you can relieve me." Great! I was in shock - this teacher was willing to cover a sixth period class on Friday during a planning period without being asked. Later that same period, another teacher approached my door to discuss a problem she was having with some textbooks. Again, I got up to tell the secretary that I was off to Mr. Jones' class, and this teacher offered to take the second half of the class in my place. At that point the "light bulb" went off. The staff (or at least these two teachers) valued my contribution to the school. I had found credibility!

Crossing over from teaching faculty to administration brings with it new challenges to preserving relationships and maintaining organizational integrity. At few points is this more evident than when a collective bargaining unit goes on strike. **Kip Anderson**, principal at Shepherd Elementary School in Hayward, California, learned just how complicated and discouraging managing in the midst of dissention can be:

> During the most recent teacher strike, my resolve and my leadership abilities were sorely tested, because during this walkout (as opposed to the one the year before) nine out of 14 teachers chose NOT to strike, and we had just added six brand new teachers to the staff the previous month. Additionally, the classified staff chose NOT to honor the strike, a sign of increased friction and factionalism between classified and certificated groups in the district and on site.
>
> Each day at 6:00 a.m. as I arrived at school, the non-striking teachers and substitutes regaled me with tales of increasing harassment from the striking teachers, who had been joined by more militant teachers from other schools. During the first couple of days things were calm, and then, with each passing day, the incidence of name calling, verbal insults, and physical harassment increased. I reiterated my intention to allow each staff member the space to make an individual decision each day about whether or not to strike. A few came back on campus the third day of the strike. It seemed just possible to achieve the goal of keeping school open, students safe and learning, and not allowing the strike to destroy what all of us had worked so hard to accomplish. I spent a great deal of time talking with people on all sides and reassuring them of our goals and how we would work to be sure they were met.
>
> One morning I was met by an irate parent, who told me that my attendance secretary, office manager, and cafeteria clerk had driven into the school parking lot and thrown at the strikers packages with teachers' names on the outside and crushed cornflakes on the inside. The teachers picked up the packages and were appalled by the remarks that were written on them. Examples included, for a resource teacher: "Why don't you just stay on the picket line, you don't teach anyway" and for a third-grade teacher: "Open this care package if you're not too stupid to figure it out." The fallout was incredible, and I went into high gear. I assured the parent this would be dealt with and began to investigate the incident. Later that morning, my office staff came to me by themselves and sheepishly informed me of what they had done--which they said was a joke. I made sure they understood the tremendous damage it had done and said that if they were sorry, they needed to find a way to communicate that to the teachers. I went out to reassure the striking teachers that the incident would be handled and let them know at the same time that I missed them and hoped the strike would end shortly, so we could begin the healing process.
>
> Two days later, the strike ended. I met with all staff to set the groundwork for the return, emphasizing that we were not in a position to judge others, that things happen in a strike situation that are not normal, and that we needed to begin the healing process. On the advice of principals who had experienced a strike, I let several days pass in tenuous peace, with people basically avoiding each other, courteous and polite, but with no real communication happening to resolve the feelings. People kept complaining to me about others, and I reiterated again and again how critical it was

for people to find a quiet, private place to air feelings. Nothing happened; more days went by, more people feeling as if they wanted to say something but did not know how. It was tremendously uncomfortable.

After consulting with several administrators and counselors, I suggested a format that would allow us to acknowledge feelings, to apologize if anybody wanted to (not insisting that it was necessary for us all to do so), and to begin to move on with our work. **All** classified and certificated staff were asked to be there; we set the structure and groundrules, and I refereed. What a difficult meeting! Hot tempers and hurt feelings--big time. Some people walked out--I had to facilitate more and so did the counselor who helped me. They came back, we finished our meeting, and the net result was that we had taken care of business. People were able to look each other in the eye again and move ahead with the school's ambitious agenda for change. We emerged stronger for having had the adversity, and the experience reaffirmed our belief that we must deal with problems honestly and openly before they become big issues that sabotage our goals.

Managing relations with the district. No matter how independent schools may be, how reliant on shared decision making and site-based management, they are usually part of a larger administrative unit, a district or subdistrict, that makes demands of its own. Protecting school-based educators from unreasonable central office demands plays a significant role in some leaders' jobs, but most leaders render unto Caesar his due. Their success is in recognizing what is fair for superordinate organizational structures to ask and how to articulate the missions of schools with other units. Skill in this area takes time to develop. **Vicki Foreman**, now principal of Kimball Elementary in Seattle, Washington, explained how she got started:

When I was a new principal, our district made a top-down decision to implement a reading program that required significant paper/pencil testing of even the very youngest learners. The teachers did not support the program and the parents did not understand it, but we **had** to do it.

During the first round of testing in the fall, I was in a kindergarten class watching the teacher, who was patiently encouraging the children to do their best and explaining that she could not help them. Most of the children filled in the bubbles and crossed out pictures by thought or guesswork, trying to comply with the teacher's request. One little girl just sat there, arms folded, pencil down. Several times the teacher encouraged her to give it a try, but she continued to just sit. When she was asked again to pick up her pencil, she responded with total exasperation, "Don't you know, I can't read, that's why I'm here."

Now I could comment on my story with many thoughts on the purpose of assessment and the appropriate connections between expected outcomes, teaching strategies, student understanding of the expectations, and authentic ways to demonstrate learning, but that's for another time.

Since then, I have often thought about the principal's leadership role in dealing with other people's agendas and district imperatives. I think we need to deal with them from our perspective as "keepers of the collective dream." I didn't know then how to

help the staff figure out where the district-imposed reading program matched our school goals and how to "turn a sow's ear into a silk purse." We just moved along, crabby and negative, and it's unlikely that our efforts contributed to student learning.

I think principals need to give staff the chance to vent, rant, and rave, and then to model for them how to use someone else's agenda to further our goals. Often it is possible. We need to help teachers ask questions like, "Why are we doing this? Where does the purpose match ours? How can we view this as a resource to further our agenda? What's in it for the school community?" We need to be careful not to join in the naysayers, the "burned out," the negative thinkers. But we **also** need to stand up and be counted when a program or initiative is just not okay. While we try to bend a program to our own purposes, we need to pull out the research and best practice evidence and try to be a positive force for change within the community, district, and school. If teachers have been allowed and encouraged to develop their own leadership and knowledge base, they can be a powerful force for change, in partnership with principals.

All of our schools operate within the context of a district, local, state, and federal government, and many community advocacy groups. They all have an agenda for our schools. Some match, some don't. Some help greatly, some don't. Principals need to exercise their leadership to help their school community thread its way through this sea of expectations toward the vision, the dreams of the school. And most important, to focus on the students and their dreams. Like the kindergartner, they all came to learn. Don't you know?

At one level, no matter how cordial school/district relations may be, schools sometimes view the district as simply another "outsider" segment of the community to which schools must relate. The last group of stories describes some of the ways sustaining leaders establish and nurture connections with other elements of the communities that send their children to school.

Managing relations with the community. Although reform conversations generally center on the substance of education, many practitioners identify poor public relations as the shoals upon which strong efforts founder, and good public relations as the protection they need from intrusion. **Patty Schumacher**, the principal of William Southern Elementary School in Independence, Missouri, described one brick in the edifice of her public relations support:

My story is about building relationships. Success is built on relationships among staff, students, administration, parents and the community.

As an example, yesterday a parent of a former William Southern student called me to express a concern that was on its way to becoming a neighborhood issue. She was having a difficult time with her daughter, a teacher, and the administration. She said, "I need some guidance. I know you don't have my children at William Southern anymore, but you know me and my children, and we trust you to give us sound advice."

Normally, parents have this network--they all call each other and soon a whole neighborhood is in an uproar about a certain teacher. In this case, because of the

relationship we had, parent to principal, she didn't go to her neighbors; she came to me. I advised her on what course I thought she should take. She said she had already talked to the teacher and had called the principal five times; the calls were not returned. Everything she said was very rational, and her irritation seemed justified.

I said, "Give the principal one more call. If that doesn't work, here's the number for the director of secondary schools." She did what I suggested and called me back that afternoon. She had reached the people she wanted to talk to and felt her concerns had been heard. In the fifty minutes it took to listen, respond, and encourage her she could work it out, I had a number of phone calls to return, students to see, teachers to observe, and parents in the office waiting to see me. Instead, I took the time to talk to a junior high school parent--a parent who knew me and trusted me--and, as a result, I felt as if I had quelled a public rebellion.

When I think of building relationships, I'm standing in the hallway and kids are coming up to me for their daily hugs. In the lunch room, students with mashed potatoes and gravy on their faces, hands, and clothes, give me a big hug on their way out to the playground. I learned a long time ago, a cleaning bill is a small price to pay for those lasting relationships.

Martha Jones, principal of Miller Middle School in Macon, Georgia, paved the way for a program to succeed by matching the aggressiveness of her public relations campaign to the aggressiveness of her campaign against school violence.

Perhaps my most radical reform has been the effort to eliminate violence in a middle school with 1,350 students and 84 teachers. In our socially and culturally divided community, the middle school I inherited 3 years ago was the established leader, academically and in every other measure. However, the 22 percent of Macon students who enroll in private schools are said to do so because they fear the violence in public schools.

So I began the preliminaries to put in place a policy of zero tolerance for violence and prepared for the flood of criticism that would certainly be heard from the parents of children who got caught. I became the chief cheerleader, enlisted the opinions and support of my superiors, teachers, parents, and students; we were off. Every 20 feet, I posted signs with the diagonal slash mark across the word "violence" written in letters dripping blood-red paint. Campus police were enlisted for random searches of lockers and bookbags. Alternatives to violence were promoted through peer mediation and closed circuit t.v. announcements. Students at Miller are suspended automatically if they (1) exchange blows; (2) promote acts of violence with their words or actions--even to the point of spreading word of impending violence, or (3) threaten violence of any kind. Those with weapons are either suspended or sent to an alternative school.

Now non-violence has become the norm. Although there have been repercussions in the form of numerous appeals, incidents of violence have decreased almost to the point of nonexistence.

Selling a community on positive programs that require its support can be as demanding as selling it on prevention. **Nancy Savory**, a principal in Bellevue, Washington, showed her management knowledge and skill in winning approval and support for adoption of a program that she knew was good for her students.

> Volunteers in the Bellevue Education System--VIBES--was organized four years ago as an effective and well-executed mentor program for students. VIBES' price tag was $11,000-- the cost of a VIBES coordinator to work directly in the school training community mentors, coordinating with classroom teachers, and identifying students who would best benefit from the nurturing assistance of their own mentor.
>
> I knew we **had** to have VIBES for my middle school because of our diverse population, increasing and intense needs of students, and low test scores, and for the recognition our school would receive as the first and only middle school committed to VIBES.
>
> Thus the journey began: inform staff, parents, and students about VIBES; clarify why we needed VIBES; assist everyone in seeing the benefits; provide for discussion, questions, thinking time; coordinate the related budget picture to show how we could afford VIBES and what might have to be sacrificed otherwise; and take the VIBES proposal through the school's official decision making group.
>
> We completed all of the steps. There were reservations. There were budget concerns. We modified where we could, incorporating people's ideas. We reached consensus as a school that we would proceed with VIBES.
>
> VIBES is now in its third year at school. Dozens of students have benefited. VIBES mentors came from retired citizens, a software company, a sporting goods company, the newspaper, students at neighboring universities, and numerous other areas. They have ranged in age from 20 to 65 years. I have found ways to supplement the budget with grant money and other sources, to replace the money spent on VIBES. The unexpected development was how much staff have personally valued the interaction between themselves and another adult in their classroom.

An unexpected development of the story telling segment of the leadership forums was the extent to which participants learned about the richness of their own experience by selecting well-remembered events and shaping them into stories to share. Out of the seeming chaos of days filled with hundreds of occurrences and interactions, they found streams of meaning that added up to lessons about practice. In the discussions that followed the story telling, participants elaborated on the lessons. They seldom came up with simple prescriptions, such as "Do what I did." Instead, they rediscovered the importance of having an ample store of professional knowledge and skills and applying it with good judgment to the situation at hand.

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Chapter 4

Strategies for Self-Assessment

Discussions among practicing leaders revealed time and again the challenges of being not simply a trail-blazer but a settler in the new "country" of reform. In one gathering, a New York City secondary principal commented:

> I worry about the term "having a vision." A vision is something that changes all the time. Providing for conversations is key. The role of leadership is initiating and sustaining conversations.

"Setting up conversations causes vision to evolve," replied an elementary principal from California. However, no matter how broad the consensus about the reform agenda, reformers seldom achieve universal approval and buy-in. "You crash up against the expectations of others," a retired Pennsylvania superintendent reminded the group, and those expectations are often fragmented and contradictory. "There are so many barriers," he explained. "It's hard to sustain dialogue in an intractable system." Furthermore, said an award-winning principal from Georgia, "Our belief systems are different from the board of education's and the state superintendent's." "Loneliness is a problem," added the New Yorker. "Even worse for superintendents," countered his colleague. Reflecting a concern of most wage earners, the superintendent then articulated one of the ultimate reality checks: "You also have to behave in such a way that you can last." Figuring out how they are doing, in relation to their dreams and ambitions, is problematic for those challenged daily by the cacophony of opinions in successful democratic organizations.

How do sustainers of reform assess their progress, document their accomplishments, and protect their processes from erosion, in light of the ambiguities that surround them? In some cases--perhaps many cases--their own supervisors are unfamiliar with the vision that inspires reform at the school level. Supervisors' initial criticisms may be wide of the mark and their reactions may dampen enthusiasm. In addition, change agents are liable to damage from the heat of friction created when the old customs clash with the new. Some of the criticism from above and below in the conventional hierarchy may be nothing more than the creaking and grinding of a system making important adjustments. But if it is loud enough, the noise of a small, uncomfortable minority can derail a generally good plan, whether or not their complaints are serious or justified. And, of course, sometimes that shrill, small voice coming from a resister makes a crucial point. How do effective leaders cope?

Self-assessment is a tool that some participants said they use to demonstrate their accountability to their own values as well as to the appropriate expectations of their professional communities. In the forums, participants described several approaches to self-assessment. For instance, one group in California targeted the general domain of shared decision making and brainstormed ways that a leader could demonstrate to a supervisor expertise in that domain. On the other hand, a group in Kentucky focused on the prerequisites for leadership under the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) and created a comprehensive, detailed rubric anchored firmly in KERA. Although the Kentucky group addressed state-initiated rather than school-initiated reform, its

The Value of Persistent Dissonance

As a teacher, I was part of the restructuring committee at my high school in 1992. We decided to use a framework based on Ted Sizer's ideas, laid out in *Horace's Compromise* and *Horace's School*. In spite of disparate personalities and teaching philosophies, our committee as a whole agreed on the value of the nine common principles. Our process led us to the decision that a change in schedule was necessary to begin the restructuring. We had visited a number of high schools implementing various kinds of "block" scheduling. One member of the committee, an English teacher very different from me in temperament and educational philosophy, then proposed a plan for a 4-block, 90-minute schedule. Everyone on the committee felt that her proposal addressed the issues paramount at our school in a way that other schedules we had observed had not. Personally, I was overjoyed that the process which had taken so much time and energy was finally reaching a conclusion.

As we discussed it, this same teacher kept insisting that while the plan offered many features that should be of help to our at-risk population, it did not offer the one-on-one help many of them seem to need. As she kept reiterating this point, I found myself becoming extremely irritated with her. I sensed that the other members of the committee felt the same way, but still she continued to worry this point. It was soon driven home to all of us that she was not going to stop talking about this and we would have to deal with it, so we began to brainstorm. Our brainstorming ultimately led to a special schedule developed for the 200 most at-risk students in the school. Instead of four classes of 90 minutes each day, they would have three classes and a 90-minute tutorial which would be set up with hands-on activities for study skills as well as one teacher from each core area for individual tutoring.

This was a very humbling experience for me. I had often viewed this English teacher as negative and not very creative. I had felt that she taught in too rigid a manner to accommodate the less able students. But she cared enough about them to persevere in the face of everyone's irritation to create a schedule that would consider them in a special way. Since that day I have resolved that when I find myself being irritated by someone who appears to me to be acting obstructively, I take a step back and consider that they must be acting from deep conviction or they would not risk the groups' or my disapproval. Every time I have done this, I have given up some of my control and have gained a thousandfold. Each time that I have voluntarily given up some of my control and focused on listening to others, I have found the people around me empowered and able to generate creative solutions to whatever problem we are facing.

Private High School Principal
Kansas City, Missouri

members expressed no less anxiety about their pioneer status and no less interest in becoming proficient as individual leaders in their home schools than did the Californians, who were heading an array of reform activities.

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Many of the participants found some important aspects of leadership hard to evaluate by conventional methods; claimed one, "Being a change agent is a thousand times more art than science." However, they also recognized and accepted the need to show accountability. Commenting on the inherent paradoxes of leadership in reform, one veteran bilingual administrator said, "We celebrate our successes; we pat ourselves on the back...but whenever we have to talk about measurable objectives, we go 'ewww!' Still, I need something to hold onto!" Some participants explained how tools such as journaling or portfolio development help them assemble evidence of their skill development. In several instances, groups seized the rare opportunity offered by the forum to consult with like-minded colleagues and construct visionary professional development programs that used individual reflection, mentoring, and group work to promote growth and assess progress. In general, these leaders emphasized developmental assessment, with its promise to document progress while stimulating critical reflection about next steps. However, a few of their ideas could also serve as formal accountability structures, providing the occasion to demonstrate real accomplishment in a previously untried arena of practice.

The three sections that follow describe some of the participants' ideas: first, individual, reflective strategies; second, activities that could be organized for a small group of learners in the role of reform sustainer; and third, a formal rubric that attempts to chart progress in a complex system. In several cases, variations on these strategies have also been documented more formally elsewhere, and brief descriptions of available resources are offered at the end of this chapter. The final section of this chapter discusses the elements that are essential for developing effective self-assessment and briefly summarizes ideas and plans developed by professionals in this field.

Individual Exercises in Assessment

Journaling. Perhaps the most personal approach to reflective assessment that forum participants used was journal keeping. Although journal keeping often serves solely as a reflective device, to capture insights and images of events, some participants use it as an anecdotal record focused on a particular dimension of leadership. Participants suggested that some aspects of behavior or manifestations of attitude or predisposition could be logged easily into a journal. For example, a leader could record instances of ensuring that student welfare was at the center of decision making or keep lists of meeting participants to show the extent of shared decision making. Journal keeping, for some, was a way to stop time for a moment and tell a story that wove fragments of an overfull experience into some durable lesson or insight. For others, the journal served simply as a time and task log that held the answer to the end of the week lament: "Where did the time go?!"

Portfolio development. Recognizing that educators often generate paper trails that show where they have been, several participants suggested developing portfolios of selected documents produced in the course of their work, rather than creating still another written record. For instance, artifacts of parent contacts--telephone logs, message slips, notes from home--can illustrate something of the scope and frequency of home/school communications. Collections of periodic newsletters from school to home or from principal to staff can also shed light on communication patterns. Clipping files that show local publicity for school events, copies of grant proposals (winners and losers), memos to the central office--all of these establish a kind of record of activity or documentation of competencies that may bear on sustaining reform.

More elaborate portfolios offer stronger documentation and potentially more complete and complex evidence of effectiveness, they said. Videotapes of supervision conferences or meetings, archives of email correspondence, and photocopies of notes to teachers and students related to reform goals may produce a thorough and authentic body of evidence supporting assertions of leadership competence--or, on the other hand, reveal why more growth is necessary to achieve acceptable levels of skill. Many participants were working with teachers to implement portfolio assessment strategies with students, and some were aware of the teacher portfolios used by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards as part of its voluntary certification program. Developing their own portfolios as part of a self-assessment plan struck them as a natural outgrowth of these related initiatives.

Action plans and performance indicators. Many leaders already write an annual professional plan that lists goals and activities related to their assignment and ambitions. For each aspect of such a plan that is related to sustaining reform, they identify a performance indicator and collect data on the indicators to demonstrate accomplishments. For example, an administrator who was worried that he spent all his time reacting to others' demands set the goal of spending a certain amount of time each week on proactive instructional leadership. Another realized that too much meeting time had been spent on "administrivia" and set a goal of including at least 15 minutes of "news from the field" at each faculty meeting. Identifying indicators related to each goal and recording them on a regular basis can provide a leader with evidence of progress (or lack thereof). Although student accomplishments are the ultimate indicator of school effectiveness, few leaders are in a position to show clear and direct influence over that output in the early stages of reform. However, they have many opportunities to contribute to conditions that lead to student success, and these contributions often can be documented. Developing a system of personal performance indicators is one way leaders chart their own progress in creating the right conditions for student learning.

Participants in the San Francisco forum--like those in several other groups--hotly debated the question of whether the leadership qualities for sustaining reform were innate or acquired and, in either case, how their effectiveness could be assessed. Challenging the hypothesis that most important qualities were ineffable and unmeasurable, one participant said, "Well, suppose the superintendent said that unless you could prove that you were skillful in reform-related areas, she would simply evaluate you according to the old rules that are unrelated to reform. If you absolutely had to show evidence, how would you do it?" Thus inspired, the group generated the following ideas for assessing success in two often-mentioned areas of reform that can be difficult to measure: creating a school culture that could sustain change after the leader leaves and building meaningful school partnerships.

Evidence of a school culture that can sustain change:

- Show what school committees are doing and who is on each, that is, demonstrate distribution of authority and responsibility among a wide range of stakeholders
- Document voting patterns on key issues, to demonstrate the breadth and depth of support
- Chart organizational functions and the decision making matrix to demonstrate the extent of participation

- Show how meetings are run--and that the reform leader does not always run them
- Show the diversity of key players
- Document the persistence of reform after the leader leaves

Evidence of meaningful school partnerships:

- Provide a roster of the school site council
- List community institutions that have formally "adopted" the school and document their productive efforts
- Report the number and nature of student apprenticeships or mentorships involving community institutions
- Create a photographic record of special events involving community partners
- Keep a sign-in log for volunteers
- List members of the advisory board and their contributions
- Document teachers' participation in community-sponsored summer learning opportunities (e.g., serving as interns in content-related industries or cultural institutions)

Participants held that the evidence collected by any combination of these means would provide some indication of a leader's proficiency in two dimensions of skill that they thought necessary for sustaining reform. The evidence could be used to inform self-assessment or shared with others--for instance, supervisors--who are concerned with accountability.

Staff/Parent/Community Surveys. Although sustaining reform is not a reliable way to build general popularity, inasmuch as change makes people uncomfortable--especially at first--many participants found surveys to be a good strategy for assessing some dimensions of leadership. They discovered that asking the right questions is essential; it may be more illuminating to learn how block scheduling has affected lesson structures than to learn whether everyone is yet delighted with its effects. Gathering baseline data is sometimes discouraging--if the news was good, change would not be in the works--but it enables one to make judgements about the nature and extent of change.

Some participants advocated using a short and simple set of questions and ratings. They chose items that ask about dimensions of leadership directly relevant to the school's reform programs. For example, this item might be on a survey sent to parents:

Circle the number that indicates your satisfaction with the home/school newsletter.

Very satisfied				*Not at all satisfied*
5	*4*	*3*	*2*	*1*

Others prefer even more streamlined, open-ended forms, with questions such as this for a survey of faculty views on the leader's performance:

(1) I like it when you....
(2) I don't like it when you....
(3) I wish that more often you would....
(4) The one thing I would like to change in school is....

Leaders use responses to items such as these to identify general trends or to choose improvement goals for the coming period.

A Little Help From My Friends...

One of the things I do, as principal of a state-funded restructuring school, is focus on student learning and some of the things we are attempting to change... For me, a weakness is in managing the process, so I have professional mentors. One is an executive in a major company that is downsizing. He shadows me for one day each month, observing my efficiency. He also gets feedback from students. Then I meet with him over lunch and share my self-assessment. In our conversations, he focuses on one question: "Has change taken place in efficiency in day-to-day management?" A second mentor is good at organizational development. I keep him on retainer for consulting; when I have a problem, I give him a call and he offers suggestions or comes in. People who are away from school life don't get bogged down in the details. My third mentor is an African American who is skillful in resolving community conflicts. My school has a lot of racial diversity and sometimes things get tense. An angry teacher in contact with 140 students a day can do a lot of damage. This mentor helps me sort out the fundamental issues and gives insight and sometimes direct assistance in solving problems.

In addition, now every year I survey the staff for feedback on my work. They see me as a problem solver, but in reality, I always give them back the problems to solve. I have institutionalized the process of collaborating. They take care of things. We have an "academy of directors." I have given them leadership training. We have developed rubrics for the areas that are my responsibilities. I do all the evaluating and supervising, but they share the rest. I have been a principal for 25 years, mostly in elementary school. I used to be autocratic, but now I am not.

Robert Duran, writing of his work as principal of Fremont High School in Oakland, CA

Some leaders use surveys only for private reflection and others share results with colleagues or supervisors. Participants made the point that surveys may be most suited for use by the bold and thick-skinned. One principal whose initial sally into the world of survey data produced some scathing anonymous feedback about his leadership said gamely that he would do it again if he thought it would lead to better experiences for kids. Then he added, "I'd sure like the same chance to rate those

respondents anonymously on their professionalism!" Another in that group said that his one adventure with surveys was enough. "I was devastated by the feedback," he confessed. "From then on I used other, less painful ways to determine whether I was measuring up to my goals, in the eyes of the faculty." The main point made by those who use surveys as part of their self-assessment was that the results do not provide the direct rating of performance. They are simply one of the indicators leaders may use to learn more about the perceptions of other stakeholders with reference to the leader's public manifestations of certain skills, attitudes, or knowledge or to the attainment of commonly espoused goals.

Using Staff Surveys for a Reality Check

In my current position as a middle school principal, one of the interesting dilemmas I faced was that I and the staff that I was joining had seemingly different ideas of leadership. The superintendent and the board had charged me to work collaboratively with the staff to transform a very traditional, high-achieving junior high school into a very student-centered, high-achieving middle school. My strength in previous schools had been the shared leadership and collaborative environment. I had no doubt that this would be true at my new assignment as well. During my first year at the school I formed a school leadership team (all teachers who volunteered), decentralized budget decisions, and formed a number of task forces around issues about curriculum and other aspects of the school program. Training was provided in team work, shared decision making processes, and group processes.

Teachers participated in these processes, but in general little was accomplished. They became frustrated--some angry--and only a few embraced the new processes. Their evaluations of my first year indicated a general sense that they thought they were all doing my job and that my leadership skills were weak. Their criticisms alleged that "I wouldn't or couldn't make a decision" and that I called "too many meetings." What I realized was that my understanding and commitment to collaboration had not been referenced against the past history and tradition of the school.

Their image of and knowledge about leadership was grounded in a top-down, authoritarian model. Mine was grounded in years of learning and realizing the value of working with others--an experience that began when I started teaching in 1970. At the end of my first year as principal, I had to discuss my dilemma with staff publicly and begin to rework with them a common meaning of shared leadership--one that has guided our work together for the past two years.

Middle School Principal
Suburban District in California

Mentors from inside or outside the system. Mentors who serve as "critical friends" are highly valued by the leaders who participated in the forums. Some found these advisors in a supervisor or a more experienced colleague in the education system. While they often served as teachers, the mentors also served as "mirrors," observing and reflecting back to their proteges information about performance that could stimulate self-assessment. Others found advisors outside

the system; corporate or university partners were a commonly mentioned resource. Corporate partners helped with applications of analytic frames, highlighting such leadership dimensions as efficiency, communication, problem solving, and continuous improvement. Several participants took lessons from their corporate mentors in Total Quality Management. Then they used corporate help in adapting some of the key principles to school life. University partners helped with curriculum, staff, or the organizational development dimensions of leadership.

These partnerships were seen as mutually beneficial. The school-based leaders learned new approaches to achieving their goals and assessing their own performance. The community-based partners gained new insights into the challenges of school leadership, and, according to participants, these insights made them stronger advocates for education.

Group Exercises in Self-Assessment

Several focus groups identified group activities for self-assessment, combining personal data collection and analysis with collective discussions and feedback to create a textured portrayal of performance that could then be measured against some agreed-upon standard. Most of the ideas were explicitly developmental, aimed at using group sessions to identify targets for personal reflection and to generate analytic frameworks.

In virtually every session, participants expressed the opinion that the forums themselves were instructive. Being asked to identify the dimensions of leadership confirmed as essential by their own experience caused them to reflect and analyze. Each item on the list added to the groups' understanding of how demanding their work was. Writing and then telling stories to illustrate their points about leadership helped them clarify their own thinking. In addition, it revealed two insights about competence in leadership: (1) different skills and knowledge apply in different circumstances and (2) most principles and programs require adaptation to accommodate local situations. Brainstorming self-assessment strategies revealed how others fed the hunger for feedback without endangering their self-esteem. A survey was not a popularity contest, some found; keeping a journal was not only a meditation exercise. There were good ways to gather opinions without being overtaken by others' agendas. Most participants expressed appreciation for the way the forum's structure left them feeling both like experts with valuable knowledge and learners in a peer group possessed of great collective wisdom.

Several groups added their own activity plans to the pool of ideas. In Philadelphia, some participants were members of collegial networks that used journaling as a way to focus discussion on leadership development. Seasoned professionals, these leaders recorded important incidents in their personal journals and met regularly to share. They renewed their commitment to reform and traded insights about how to persist and succeed by means of reading journal entries aloud to each other and discussing what could have been or should have been or, thanks to professional development, was done.

Participants in the Georgia forum suggested the following comprehensive professional development plan that centers on self-assessment:

(1) Each trainee generates a list of key dimensions of leadership for sustained reform, based on experience and study.

(2) In a group, trainees compare lists and each chooses the dimensions on which he or she wishes to concentrate.

(3) Trainees acquire the desired skills and knowledge through such strategies as shadowing expert practitioners, observations, and discussions.

(4) Trainees keep "diagnostic journals" in which they log descriptions of learning experiences and evidence of developing competence.

(5) A special team of mentors, chosen from the wider community on the grounds of their expertise in particular areas of leadership targeted by trainees, meets periodically with the novices to provide feedback on progress and help structure action plans to promote further growth.

Although participants emphasized that the learners in this case retained control of the assessment process and could use it to achieve self-selected goals, they also pointed out that it provided a structure that could serve generally as an apprenticeship for new leaders.

Forum participants in San Francisco and Seattle independently recommended processes that grew out of a particular set of beliefs. They suggested that the skills of sustaining leadership are acquired through making one's own meaning from experiences in which one has had a chance to influence events and reflect on the consequences. They advocated a learning process that encouraged choosing a leadership development goal, examining case studies that have this goal as a central focus, writing case studies from their own experience to explore the meaning of the goal, and sharing their cases with colleagues. The menu of potentially useful activities they identified included working with a mentor, convening a study group of peers, observing the leadership activities of others and debriefing those experiences, creating a portfolio containing evidence of leadership development, and using electronic networks to extend discussion and analysis.

Tailor-made Rubrics

One way to focus data collection and calibrate measurements of progress is to create a rubric. Participants from Kentucky generated a rubric targeting the specific leadership dimensions demanded to implement the provisions of the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA). The rubric, which runs to about 19 pages in table form, details particular behaviors that define levels of competence, from the novice rating of 1 to the distinguished rating of 4, in 12 areas of leadership: assessment, curriculum, instruction, school transformation plans, parent involvement, community engagement, high school restructuring, technology, site-based decision making, primary grade programs, personnel evaluation, and budget. Table 1 lists the behaviors that characterize levels of competence in two aspects of developing a school transformation plan: "vision" and "communication."

Because Kentucky has a high-stakes assessment system and a strong, statewide reform mandate, educators have been systematically aligning activities and accountability structures to promote coherent planning and reporting. This rubric for leadership will be one of the tools available to principals who want to structure their self-assessment to match the demands of reform. In addition, the state's team of "distinguished educators"--expert practitioners employed to support reform efforts--can use rubrics as coaching tools in their professional development programs for

leaders in schools that fail to meet expected achievement goals. (A more extended excerpt from the Kentucky rubric is attached as an appendix.)

Table 1: Segment of the Kentucky Leadership Rubric

Rating	Vision	Communication
4	• Sees that a shared vision drives the curriculum through the plan. • Aligns school vision/mission with that of the district	• Ensures that all audiences are targeted • Seeks out opportunities to communicate to all audiences
3	• Sees that the school transformation plan is based on a shared vision	• Ensures that most audiences are targeted • Willing to articulate plan upon request
2	• Sees that a vision/mission is developed	• Sees that limited audiences are targeted • Willing to articulate plan in limited settings
1	• Does not ensure the development of a vision/mission	• Not concerned with targeting audiences • Not willing to articulate plan

Developing a Self-Assessment System

Our conversations with forum participants revealed that for every one who used self-assessment for professional purposes there were two or three who viewed it as an appealing but as-yet-untried solution to the problem of collecting evidence of effectiveness. As pathfinders, they may not score high on traditional rating systems, but as accountable members of an education system, they appreciate the importance of documenting progress. From what participants said about their work and their approaches to accountability and from our own experience as educators, we have learned a few simple principles to guide development of a self-assessment system.

Like any other assessment, self-assessment has three components: (1) the criteria that define effectiveness in a given setting, (2) valid and manageable data collection methods, and (3) appropriate analytic frameworks.

Criteria. First, criteria for assessment must be identified. In self-assessment, the basic question is, "Am I doing a good job?" Answering that question begins with describing what a "good job" looks like in the relevant context. In one setting, a leader may decide that being a perceptive and available listener is highly desirable; in another setting, having and sharing well-founded ideas about reform options may be key; in still a third, a friendly but firm management plan may be necessary. Participants in the forums had expectations of themselves that varied by context and stage of professional development. These expectations are the foundation of their criteria for self-assessment. Although criteria may vary widely, in this instance they ought to reflect concern with both the nature of educational institutions and the particular values and circumstances that influence practice in a particular place. Criteria are implicit in the leadership dimensions identified in the forum discussions, but other skills and knowledge may be demanded by particular reform movements.

Being effective involves meeting the demands of a given situation, not necessarily demonstrating a set of unrelated skills included in a generic definition of leadership.

A problem with conventional assessment criteria may be that the values and priorities they reflect are not particularly relevant to the challenges of sustaining a given reform effort. However, they usually have the virtue of being well known and historically defensible, and this is no small matter with regard to overall fairness. If other criteria are to be added to the mix or substituted for conventional criteria, they should have at least as solid a foundation. A leader should be able to make the case that any criterion that is the focus of assessment is important for the success of the school.

Methods. Second, data collection methods suitable for use in self-assessment vary in their relevance, practicality, and accuracy. Some self-assessment strategies are fairly subjective; reviewing one's own journal entries is among these. Others are more objective, for example tracking time spent coaching, counting the number of different people involved in substantive school activities, or adding up the dollars earned from grant writing. Still others fall between those two; collecting feedback on surveys or open-ended questionnaires or in face-to-face meetings might be included in this group. While strategies differ in their technical rigor, many can offer useful insights about performance and progress when used appropriately.

Data analysis. Third, analytic approaches should make technical sense and illuminate the important issues. For example, using incidents recorded in an impromptu journal can provide evidence of trends only if the writer understands something about the origin of the entries, in general. That is, if a journal keeper writes a daily account, essentially an expanded appointment calendar, it might give a dependable summary of how time is spent. However, if a journal keeper writes sporadically, most often motivated by strong feeling of one kind or another, then that account can be used only to chart the more limited arena of the nature and frequency of emotionally loaded occurrences. Similarly, in many cases, using surveys that primarily measure satisfaction may sometimes be less useful in determining whether a project is going well than in determining whether opinions are changing. Data analysis methods should answer the self-assessor's burning questions.

Different strokes. As a forum group in Philadelphia pointed out, many easy-to-use strategies would serve equally well to document many commonly adopted criteria for success in sustaining reform. Choosing a strategy that matches one's learning style or circumstances makes a lot of sense. In table 2 we show a few of the ways a leader might use self-assessment to document progress or accomplishment in criteria drawn from the four main categories of leadership dimensions identified by the forum participants. Our examples are quite narrow, but the possibilities are limitless.

Connecting with the system. For forum participants, the appeal of self-assessment was that it permitted them to create an accountability system tailored to their avowed principles and situation. However, they also recognized the importance of being responsive to legitimate demands of other authorities in the district. This suggests that some aspects of self-assessment could be aimed specifically at components of professional performance that are deemed crucial by outsiders. For example, if a leader determines that becoming a better listener is her personal goal in the overall effort to create a more caring academic community, she might keep records of her progress in a journal used for self-assessment. To support the whole school's effort to hold all members accountable for achieving that goal, she might choose another, publicly visible indicator to show her contribution. Another leader might take advantage of personal feedback from a mentor from the

community to support a self-assessment of efficiency, but share other data with the superintendent to show, for example, higher productivity or lower labor costs.

Disconnecting from the system. In a way, planned obsolescence is an essential component of sustained reform. As one California group said, we can see that reform is sustained if it is still happening after the leader departs. How can a leader build in supports for his or her departure? Every person on a school staff ought to be making an important contribution, but if reform is to survive normal turnover among leaders (and other staff) then its work must routinely be shared by many. Leadership will always be needed, but only when its many forms and purposes are distributed among able people is it capable of sustaining reform. Paradoxically, participants spoke warmly about the need to share responsibility and authority while at the same time describing work days that often ran around the clock.

Perhaps another target for self-assessment, then, is skill in creating roles and systems in which others assume leadership and the formal leader is sometimes just a strong team member. This might not make the work day shorter, because serving as a team member may also involve long hours, but seems a prerequisite for helping a school become self-sustaining. The capacity to disconnect from the school without derailing reform may be a key component of sustaining leadership.

Ready-to-Use Self-Assessment Instruments

Self-assessment instruments designed to match particular programs or situations may serve as resources for leaders with different agendas. For example, the National Association of Elementary School Principals (1991) has published *Proficiencies for Principals* that includes several instruments that are especially relevant to the challenges of sustaining reform. Among them are communication (active listening), group processes, evaluation, and organizational management. For each proficiency there are several behavioral indicators that define the span of competencies. For each indicator, the self-assessor rates importance to the current position, current level of proficiency, and need for growth. In summary statements for each section, the self-assessor gives an overall rating and lists activities that could be used to improve skills. Following the assessment section is a professional development planning guide designed to facilitate further learning.

For those seeking assistance in analyzing common leadership functions and setting behavioral goals, the *Professional Development Resource Book for School Principals* (Leak, McKay, Splaine, Walker, & Heid, 1990) offers a comprehensive guide. For each of ten skill areas relevant to school leadership in general, Appendix A lists several skill clusters. Together they form a pool of possibilities for self-assessment tied to the challenges of a given setting.

Forum participants' stories about practice and their struggles with accountability measures that don't fit new models of schooling indicate that skill in self-assessment may be an essential component of leadership for sustained change. Whether they invent their own systems or adapt others to fit may not be as important as developing their own capacity to judge when their efforts are succeeding.

Table 2: Self-Assessment Criteria, Methods, and Analytic Strategies

Criteria	What constitutes evidence in the following data collection methods?			
	Journaling	Portfolio Development	Surveying	Working With a Mentor
Vision and values: Makes school vision--to be a caring academic community--a reference point in planning decisions	Response to prompt every Friday: What did I do this week to cultivate our ability to act as a caring academic community?	A file of clippings of newsletter items or copies of documents in which the school vision is appropriately referenced	Subjects: School staff Item: Name one thing we did at a staff meeting this month to help us create a more caring academic community	Mentor observes a major school community meeting or event and comments on evidence of leadership with respect to school vision
Partnership and voice: Involves new people and kinds of people (e.g., parents, retirees, college volunteers, business partners) in school activities	A running record of new people (e.g., parents who never came before) and types of people (e.g., college and senior citizen volunteers) who attend each event, with a little about how they happened to come	Copy of sign-in sheets for school volunteers and meetings, with annotations next to the names of newcomers that explain which segment of the community they represent and how they were recruited to come	Subjects: Parents Item: Listed below are activities for parents, students, and/or community members that we have done in the past. Please circle the ones you would come to if we did them at a convenient time this year.	Mentor and leader review strategies used to advertise events and/or opportunities to be involved in school in light of participation records for each and discuss what has worked to stimulate participation and what else might be tried.
Knowledge and daring: Makes opportunities for staff to learn and advise	Brief descriptions of learning opportunity, staff person who had it, and purpose it serves for the school	Copy of memos suggesting or confirming staff participation, receipts or programs or training artifacts collected by staff and annotated to explain leadership support for activity	Subjects: School Staff Item: List the professional activities related to school programs that you have engaged in this semester.	Mentor and leaders review the school budget together to identify resources that could be used for professional development
Savvy and persistence: Responds promptly to routine district requests	A running record of deadlines beaten, made, and missed	A running record of deadlines beaten, made, and missed	Subjects: School Improvement Team Item: Listed below are some areas of school management that are essential for effectiveness. Circle three that you think need improvement. Next to each of the three, explain how you think it could be better.	Mentor spends a day shadowing with a specific goal (e.g., monitoring listening skills or efficiency) and debriefs with observations and advice.
Sample data analysis approach	Track for improvements in the frequency or quality of desired behavior.	Create a matrix tally sheet, with school goals along one side and staff members along the other. Make a tally whenever a staff person is given a learning opportunity related to a school goal.	Track changes from baseline data. Identify activities that are attractive to parents. Identify management areas most often cited.	Identify indicators of success or growth in targeted areas and review them with mentor.

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Chapter 5

Conclusions

In this project, we tried to learn about the dimensions of leadership necessary for sustaining school improvement and reform by simply asking successful practitioners how they did it. While this approach does not generate the kind of reliable findings we get from adequately controlled formal research, it could and did produce a rich and diverse set of ideas to explore and test. Many of the ideas are clearly recognizable from the literature on leadership writ large. Although leaders exercise initiative and take their responsibilities, they engage other community stakeholders in partnerships aimed at helping students achieve high standards. At a profound level, good leaders appeal to others' best interests and motivations and support their pursuit of the common good. However, some kinds of knowledge and skill are particularly useful for keeping the forces of effective change vital and resisting the drag of institutional inertia and the drag of the status quo; these are different from the qualities used more generally to launch reform and school improvement strategies. Several participants registered their recognition of this fact in relatively oblique comments such as these:

> Actually, I prefer just to start up new programs and then move on, but this time I decided to stay.

> The district hired me because I clearly knew how to turn the school around. Once I'd done that, I had to learn new skills to keep it going.

> After the third year, the system was in place. Figuring out what to do next became my full-time quest.

The lists of leadership dimensions produced in every discussion suggest that, despite overlap with other areas of leadership, some special qualities help leaders who are challenged with continuing reforms that are already up and running.

New Conceptions of Leadership

A useful metaphor for the challenge of sustaining leadership is that of agricultural harvests. Those with a long view of agricultural productivity adopt strategies that rely on self-renewing systems. That is, resources that crops take out of an ecosystem are replaced with resources that are themselves renewable. The cycle of production is maintained by balancing crop choices, land use practices, and soil enrichment activities to ensure long-term function, rather than by applying some scarce resource taken from elsewhere.

Sustaining leaders demonstrate skill in creating systems that are renewable, in the broad sense; they consider not just what will work today, but what will work henceforward. Start-up activities may draw on everyone's adrenalin rush, charging overtime against temporary energy reserves. They may also use outside resources--consultants from an educational lab or corporate-financed whole staff retreats. But they recognize that if innovation is to be effective and remain fresh

and if problems are to be solved as they arise, then the resources of the school as a system have to be invested wisely. When the dust of innovation settles, everyone needs to have found a team role that can be coordinated and managed in an ordinary workday with funding that represents the community's predictable long-term support.

A Few Important Ideas

Forum participants suggested that the ability and willingness to hear a chorus of voices and form a wide array of partnerships seem to be the hallmarks of these leaders. Reform initiators may be single-minded--indeed, those who began that way remember their single-minded days fondly!--but sustaining reform requires tolerance of ambiguity. Good sustainers seem able to arrange the potluck offerings of the stakeholders at hand into a feast that feeds the collective mission. Mind you, they do not turn into relativists, accepting every idea as worthy in false attempts to promote engagement. Instead, they work with people to find the common ground and help them find ways to invest their talents and perpetuate their relevant values.

In addition, sustaining leaders promote a vision that has widespread support and that adapts to changing conditions while retaining some fundamental integrity. Their vision is student-centered and informed by solid understanding of the principles of effective teaching and learning. They celebrate diversity in talent, culture, and perspectives and integrate it into everyday school life.

Sustaining leaders (at least, those who survive long enough to be nominated for forums like ours) choose their risks carefully and take them dauntlessly--but they generally do their homework first. Like Captain Kirk, they may "boldly go where no one's gone before," but like Mr. Spock, they prepare for every contingency. They plan to arrive safe and sound, with teachers and students intact. Without the singlemindedness of some adventurers to serve as a shield for tender egos, sustaining leaders find other ways to cope with the criticism inevitably tossed their way by both those who think the "dream" has been compromised and those who think the status quo has to be maintained. There is no question that they notice when their supervisors, faculties, and/or communities do not support them; they take serious criticism seriously. But they learn to work through their own hurt feelings and even their occasional understandable resentment without losing sight of the school's mission and their own responsibility to help students succeed. They use a balance of input from a variety of sources to inform decision making.

Sustaining leaders are good managers, or, at any rate, they make sure management gets done well. They do not act as if a good idea is all one needs to succeed; they design organizational arrangements that incline people to do the right thing. They supervise with a view to cultivating excellence. They treat the district office with respect--although they do not respond to every request for accommodation. Sustaining leaders manage with the goal of institutionalizing supports for reform, including the data collection and analysis activities that maintain a continuous critical stance toward effectiveness. Developing and sharing evidence of success is an important part of their work.

Sustaining leaders often feel isolated, according to forum participants. Some said that they were viewed as troublemakers in their districts--people without the proper reverence for historical practice or formal regulations. Because their practice and their mindsets are beyond the frontiers of tradition, conventional assessments do not often address the matters central to their success. They expressed willingness to be held accountable, but not to a set of instruments ill-matched to the

carefully wrought visions of their schools. For professionals in this predicament, serious self-assessment can provide essential support and the kind of evidence needed for self-corrective action.

Self-Assessment Skill: A Professional Development Goal

We began this project curious about what successful sustaining leaders would view as the key dimensions of their skill, and how--in a system so often bound by old orthodoxies--they knew when they were doing a good job. We discovered that they share many ideas about essentials. However, fewer than expected had developed systematic ways to evaluate their own performance. In each forum, many had an "aha" experience, learning through dialogue what indicators they could use to tell if they were still on course. In each forum, there was consensus about the need for more opportunities to reflect on practice in light of the specific visions and values that their reforms hold and in the company of colleagues who share either a reform orientation or the experience of being the solitary gardenia in an iris patch. From their stories and comments, we conclude that competence in designing and implementing self-assessment plans should be a central element of their professional development.

Appendix

Excerpts from the Leadership Rubric aligned with provisions of the Kentucky Education Reform Act

Leadership Rubric--Area: Assessment

Dimensions	4	3	2	1
A. KIRIS Preparation (Administration Standard 1)	• Understands and articulates what students are asked to know and be able to do on KIRIS • Ensures assessment strategies are integrated into regular classroom • Facilitates implementation of practice assessment and test-wiseness activities • Has clear understanding of individual and school strengths • Utilizes assessment feedback to make adjustments in program	• Understands what students are asked to know and be able to do on KIRIS • Supports integration of assessment in regular classrooms • Encourages practice assessment and test-wiseness activities • Understands individual and school strengths • Some adjustments in programs made	• Is familiar with KIRIS assessment • Encourages some practice assessment and test-wiseness activities • Encourages some integration of assessment in regular classroom • Aware of individual and school strengths and areas of need • No adjustments in programs made	• Unfamiliar with the KIRIS assessment • Does not encourage practice assessment and test-wiseness activities • Integration of assessment in regular classroom not encouraged • No awareness of individual and school strengths and areas of need • No adjustments in programs made
B. Math Portfolio (Administration Standard 1)	• Understands and participates in the portfolio process • Articulates the scoring and analyzing of portfolios to all stakeholders • Provides strategic support for implementation of portfolios	• Understands portfolio process • Articulates the scoring and analyzing of portfolios to some stakeholders • Provides strategic support for implementation of portfolios	• Aware of portfolio process • No articulation of the scoring/analyzing of portfolios • Encourages the implementation of portfolios	• Uninvolved in portfolio process
C. Writing Portfolio (Administration Standard 1)	• Understands and participates in the portfolio process • Articulates the scoring and analyzing of portfolios to all stakeholders • Provides strategic support for implementation of portfolios	• Understands portfolio process • Articulates the scoring and analyzing of portfolios to some stakeholders • Provides strategic support for implementation of portfolios	• Aware of portfolio process • No articulation of the scoring/analyzing of portfolios • Encourages the implementation of portfolios	• Uninvolved in portfolio process

Indicators

A

- Attends KIRIS training session, studies released assessment items, and facilitates staff in similar activities
- Monitors lessons to ensure integration of assessment
- Involved in disaggregation of data and facilitates staff in process

B

- Attends portfolio training
- Facilitates portfolio process with all stakeholders
- Coordinates all portfolio activities
- Involved in portfolio scoring
- Provides resources for teachers during portfolio process (i.e., release time for scoring and conferencing)

C

- Attends portfolio training
- Facilitates portfolio process with all stakeholders
- Coordinates all portfolio activities
- Involved in portfolio scoring
- Provides resources for teachers during portfolio process (i.e., release time for scoring and conferencing)

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Leadership Rubric--Area: Curriculum

Dimensions	4	3	2	1
A. Program Evaluation (Administration Standard 1 and 2)	• Facilitates and participates with stakeholders in planning process • Works with stakeholders to analyze school and student data to set program goals • Establishes and utilizes system for monitoring progress of program • Has clear understanding of individual and school strengths • Utilizes assessment feedback to make adjustments in program	• Initiates stakeholder participation in organized program planning • Analyzes school and student data to set program goals • Establishes system for monitoring progress of program	• Sets program goals without stakeholders • Consults school and student data but does not utilize it for program planning • Monitors program without a system	• Is not able to articulate program goals • Does not consult school and student data • Does not monitor program progress regularly
B. Curriculum Alignment (Administration Standard 1 and 2)	• Facilitates curriculum planning which clearly identifies in all content areas what students must know and be able to do • Involves school community/stakeholders in the curriculum planning process and communicates curriculum to the community • Ensures development and implementation of an integrated curriculum in all content areas with extensions to the real world	• Participates in curriculum planning process • Communicates the curriculum effectively to the school community • Ensures curriculum planning that results in the integration of all content areas with extensions to the real world	• Allows a curriculum planning process to occur • Allows school community access to curriculum • Ensures an integrated real world curriculum in some content areas	• Curriculum planning does not occur • School community has no access to curriculum • Absence of integrated, real world curriculum

Indicators

A

- Utilizes hard (KIRIS, portfolio analysis, non-cognitive) and soft (surveys, questionnaires) data
- Utilizes evaluation information and goals of STP
- Facilitates continued discussion of assessment/evaluation
- Meets regularly to review and revise programs

B

- Reviews resources - national standards, content guidelines, academic expectations, curriculum frameworks
- Facilitates curriculum design teams
- Participates in continuous professional development activities in curriculum design and development

Leadership Rubric--Area: Instruction

Dimensions	4	3	2	1
A. Regular Program (Administration Standard 1)	• Works with teachers in developing and implementing appropriate and innovative instructional practices that support the 57 academic expectations • Establishes and utilizes a staff evaluation process that reflects implementation of those instructional practices • Provides resources/personnel and works with teachers to identify students' individual needs and match instructional practices to the needs • Utilizes information from formal and informal observations, student needs assessment, and individual growth plans to drive professional development activities	• Works with teachers in developing and implementing appropriate instructional practices that support the 57 academic expectations • Establishes staff evaluation process that reflects implementation of those instructional practices • Works with teachers to identify students' individual needs and matches instructional practices to these needs • Utilizes information from observations, and student needs assessment, or individual growth plans to drive professional development activities	• Monitors and evaluates the instructional practices of teachers • Poorly defined staff evaluation process used • Minimal attention to individual student needs and modified instructional practices • Utilizes information from observations or student needs assessment or individual growth plans to drive professional development activities	• Pays no attention to the instructional practices of the staff • No process for staff evaluation used • Recognizes that there are individual student needs but has no plan for meeting their needs • Does not utilize information from observations or student needs assessment or growth plans to drive professional development activities
B. Support Program (Administration Standard 1)	• Understands and implements guidelines of all support programs, and articulates these accurately to stakeholders • Monitors, evaluates, and encourages revision of support programs to ensure they address the needs of the whole child	• Understands the guidelines of all support programs, articulates these to stakeholders • Monitors the implementation of the programs	• Provides stakeholders with the guidelines of all support programs and monitors the programs without a clear focus • No articulation of the scoring/analyzing of portfolios • Encourages the implementation of portfolios	• No evidence of support program monitoring

Indicators

A

- Creates and maintains current research library
- Identifies professional development opportunities and encourages staff to continue professional growth
- Models "best" instructional practices
- Provides maintenance opportunities
- Reviews current research and shares information with staff and parents
- Facilitates planning for and discussion of student needs (learning styles, multiple intelligences, special abilities)

B

- Ensures integration of support programs (ESS, Chapter 1, FRYSC, Title II, Title IX, IDEA)
- Meets regularly with building coordinators to plan, evaluate, and revise programs
- Ensures that support programs are reflected in STP
- Involved in portfolio scoring
- Provides resources for teachers during portfolio process (i.e., release time for scoring and conferencing)

C

- Attends portfolio training
- Facilitates portfolio process with all stakeholders
- Coordinates all portfolio activities
- Involved in portfolio scoring
- Provides resources for teachers during portfolio process (i.e., release time for scoring and conferencing)

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Additional Resources

To expand or begin new partnerships to address needs in your school, call the U.S. Department of Education, 1-800-USA-LEARN, and ask for any of the following publications. They have been developed to help educators, parents, and community partners meet the challenges of enabling all students to achieve high standards, and they are available free.

America Goes Back to School Activity Guide

Strong Families, Strong Schools

Partnership for Family Involvement in Education Prospectus

An Invitation to Your Community: Building Community Partnerships for Learning

Summer Home Learning Recipes

Preparing Your Child for College

Employers, Families, and Education

*READ*WRITE*NOW! Kit*

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